IN DEFENSE OF DHARMA

Just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka

Tessa J. Bartholomeusz

RoutledgeCurzon
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

IN DEFENSE OF DHARMA

This is the first book to examine war and violence in Sri Lanka from the perspective of cross-cultural studies on just-war tradition and theory. In a study that is textual, historical, and anthropological, it is argued that the ongoing Sinhala–Tamil conflict is often justified by resorting to religious stories that allow for war when Buddhism is in peril. Since Buddhism is often commonly assumed to be a religion that never allows for war, this book – by suggesting otherwise – brings Buddhism into the ethical dialogue on religion and war. Without a realistic consideration of just-war thinking in contemporary Sri Lanka, it will remain impossible to understand the existing power of religion that can create both peace and war.

Tessa J. Bartholomeusz was Professor of Religion at The Florida State University, Tallahassee. She was the author of *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka* (1994) and co-editor of *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka* (1998). Her work concentrated on gender, religious identity, and, most recently, on Buddhism in the USA.

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ROUTLEDGE RoutledgeCurzon
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2002
by RoutledgeCurzon
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by RoutledgeCurzon
29 West 35th Street, New York NY 10001

This edition published in the Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2005.

RoutledgeCurzon is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-99480-9 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-7007-1681-5 (hbk)
ISBN 0-7007-1682-3 (pbk)

FOR JEFF

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FOREWORD

Tessa Jane Bartholomeusz was born on 13 August 1958 in the seaport town of Trincomalee. Her father, a Dutch Burgher officer in the Sri Lankan Army, was an alumnus of Royal College and a graduate, one of Sri Lanka's first, of Sandhurst; her mother, an Englishwoman, had trained at the Royal Academy of Music. It was not long after her birth that Tessa's family recognized the degree to which the political and social perturbations of the time threatened to blight their prospects. Emigration to the USA supervened, followed by hard-earned, that is to say thoroughly merited, prosperity. These are details of Tessa's life that possess more than merely personal interest, because the cosmopolitanism of her heritage and the circumstances of her immigration became profound influences on her intellectual and scholarly development, as readers of her work will quickly recognize. Hence, then, the centrality to her research of issues such as the relationship between religion and ethnicity, the complexities and complications attending (or dogging) the constructions, academic and vulgar alike, of the West and the East, and – and this especially – marginalization, whatever its situation and whatever its derivation, be it a function of race, religion, or gender.

Though she began her university career as the holder of a scholarship in drama, Tessa was soon attracted to the comparative study of religion, in which occupation her attentions were quickly concentrated on the religions of South Asia. She took an Honors Degree in Religion at the University of Florida; an MA in Religion from the Florida State University followed, after which she studied Buddhism and Hinduism at the University of Virginia, where in 1991 she received her PhD in the History of Religions with a dissertation on Buddhist lay nuns in Sri Lanka. Students of South Asia must go there, of course, and so Tessa's education included stints at Varanasi Hindu University (where she studied Sinhala) and at the University of Peradeniya. She also studied Sinhala at Cornell University. Tessa taught Hindi in the Department of Oriental Languages at the University of Virginia and religious studies at Indiana University in Indianapolis. In 1993 she joined the Faculty of Religion at the Florida State University, where, at the time of her death, she was Professor of Religion. She was a brilliant teacher: her classes were always filled, and her success was appreciated by her colleagues, as her multiple teaching awards – she received a University Teaching Award, The Superior Liberal Studies

Honors Teaching Award, and a University Teaching Incentive Program Award – attest. It was not simply her charm or her style that attracted undergraduates in abundance (though more than a few undergraduate women, from various disciplines, looked to Tessa as a role model, a position in which she was not entirely comfortable): it was her passion for her scholarship, her ideas, and her determination to convince her classes how very much the ways in which we think about religion or gender or violence matter to the lives of everyone, even comfortable, cosseted middle-class Americans.

Tessa's first book, *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka*, appeared in the series *Cambridge Studies in Religious Traditions* in 1994. Her interest in the *dasa sil mata*, what she described as a "lay nun," went back to 1983, when, during a visit to Sri Lanka, one of her relations offered to introduce her to a Buddhist nun, an offer she met with skepticism. ("I had been taught that there were no nuns in Theravadin Buddhist countries," as she would put it when recollecting the event.) The woman she met, Sister Sudharma, a seventy-year-old "mother of the ten precepts," fascinated her: here was a figure whose very existence instantiated the adaptability, the vivacity, of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka (as well as the importance of studying religion "on the ground" and not exclusively in a library or classroom), and who embodied the complications of gender, of femininity, in South Asian society in general and more specifically in Sri Lankan Buddhism. Thereafter she could not stop reading about female renunciation in South Asia, not that there was so much to read about the topic in those days, and in any event most of it was more concerned with "influences" than with the lived realities of the thousands of individuals who constituted the "phenomenon" of female renunciation. Hence the impetus for the research that resulted in *Women Under the Bo Tree*, a comprehensive account of the history of the re-emergence of female renunciation in the nineteenth century, of Buddhist ideas about gender that shaped the tradition of female renunciation, of the multiple and diverse voices of past and present-day nuns, their supporters and their critics – all of which shed considerable light on the position of women in contemporary Sri Lankan society and all of which was formulated in a style accessible to students of gender and religion who are not South Asian specialists. *Women Under the Bo Tree* had been preceded by specialist articles that adumbrated her treatment of the topic, the most frequently cited of which remains "The female mendicant in Buddhist Sri Lanka" (in J. Cabezon (ed.), *Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender*, 1992). But it was the book that made the topic mainstream, and it was an instant success, going through two printings, despite its price (the expense of the book was a source of concern to Tessa, who worried that its cost might render it inaccessible to academics and intellectuals in Sri Lanka). The book, at once historical and anthropological, showcases all of Tessa's best techniques: its evidence derives from sources that are archival and textual (canonical texts, diaries, and even literary works are exploited), and, of course, from interviews with multitudes of lay nuns (and with others holding strong opinions about the institution of the *dasa sil mata*); the interpretation of that evidence, because it integrates interviews with documentation,

whatever the difficulties resulting therefrom, eschews simplicity as it instead discerns changing historical patterns in a fabric of daunting particularity. This is why one finds in *Women Under the Bo Tree* such rich accounts of the careers of Anagarika Dharmapala and Miranda de Souza Canavarro beside the stories of lay practitioners such as Sister Sudharma. Contexts and individuals are, in Tessa's approach to religion, what matter: hence the book's inclusion of an ample dramatis personae. The book received many accolades; Tessa appreciated them all, but she especially relished a review that complimented her work for its "judicious empathy and thorough social and historical contextualizing of its subject" (*Journal of Asian Studies*, 1996, p. 747). These were her chief intellectual values.

And here, perhaps, is the right point to return to her passion for scholarship. Ideas excited her, but also people. In the preface to her dissertation, she neglects the usual starched dissertationese to write: "I am so happy that I was able to conduct research in such a spectacular setting, and with such interesting and helpful people. All of the people whom I met in the course of my fieldwork were extremely kind and gracious … My friendships with the lay nuns among whom I conducted research were an invaluable source of comfort to me. I only hope that I can do them justice in the pages that follow" (p. vi). She was ever grateful to the Colombo Young Men's Buddhist Association for their unfailing courtesy and helpfulness, even – especially – in the midst of intellectual disagreements (*v.* "The Buddhist and the American," *The Buddhist*, LXVII, 1997). The same affection for the men and women of Sri Lanka was evident in her genuine anxiety that, in conducting fieldwork in Sri Lanka, she might reduce Sri Lankans to mere subjects, thereby cheating them of their humanity (*v.* "Watching Americans watching Sri Lankans," *Sri Lanka Studies*, September 1992). The greatest part of this sympathy sprang from Tessa's natural compassion, as those who knew her will recognize at once, but a large part also owed itself to her unusual situation with respect to Sri Lankan society, in which she was at once an insider and an outsider: a Burgher, a woman, and half-English at that, but also an academic reared in America (she began her Sinhala studies in India and in Ithaca), she combined an insider's pride (and pain) in Sri Lanka with an outsider's enthusiasm for its every facet. Her journeys to Sri Lanka were different, in vital respects, from those either of the stranger or of the ex-patriot, and this special space gave her a distinctive perspective from which to view the culture she so much loved.

After *Women Under the Bo Tree*, related papers appeared – an exploration of the life and the fiction of Canavarro (an exercise in literary criticism as well as historical narrative), a defense of Dharmapala – but also new, and varied, topics, such as her examination of Buddhist–Catholic relations in the late nineteenth century, a paper on the changing status of women in Sri Lanka owing to the advent of what she, and others, describe as Buddhist fundamentalism, and an essay on neo-orientalism. One-trick ponies never impressed Tessa. She often said that she knew how much her work would benefit if she could only slow down, read and re-read, rewrite and re-edit. But her ideas were too many and varied, and she once remarked, long before she was diagnosed with cancer and therefore without a

hint of irony, that she did not believe that a single lifetime would suffice to allow her to study all of the issues in Buddhism and in Sri Lankan society that she so very much wanted to understand. Gender, however, remained an abiding concern, and one paper in particular displayed her nuanced mastery of the manifold significances of gender in canonical Buddhism and in Sri Lankan society: "Mothers of Buddhas, mothers of nations: Kumaranatunga and her meteoric rise of power in Sri Lanka," *Feminist Studies,* 25, 1999. There the privileged category of motherhood is shown to possess a cultural and political potency, deriving from its function as a metaphor for dependent-arising, that, in the case of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaranatunga's election as prime minister in 1994, overpowered other gender assumptions that would normally have been impediments to her political success.

The methodology is consistent. An issue, or a set of issues, aroused Tessa's curiosity and motivated her to assemble relevant data (texts, documents, interviews) for analysis, the results of which illuminated problems, conceptual and practical alike, and pointed the way toward further progress. Theoretical awareness, in Tessa's view, was crucial to intelligent analysis. But theoretical perspectives mattered to the extent that they helped one to understand better the data before one: theorizing, especially theorizing untethered to the practical effects of religion on everyday life, was never the point. In other words, knowledge, and its potential for helpful application, was the thing to be expanded. This was, for Tessa, the essence of scholarship. She had little time for infinite regressions of problematizing (by no means the same thing as adding refinement or nuance to an argument), a habit that she regarded as a sort of beating around the bush in an effort to escape commitment or criticism. Real conclusions, she believed, become signposts, and, often, targets; that, she knew well, was proof that one was making a difference (no one should be surprised by the degree to which she admired the writings of S. J. Tambiah and H. L. Seneviratne for these very qualities of boldness and courage).

In no aspect of her work is the desire to be helpful more obvious than in her collaborations with the distinguished historian Chandra R. de Silva. Together they edited *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka* (1998), a richly varied collection of essays each of which deals with various Sri Lankan minorities and their responses, invariably complex, to Sinhala-Buddhist fundamentalist ideology, itself, as they and their contributors insist, a not uncomplicated phenomenon. But it is certainly a contested one, and some reviewers, although admiring the clarity of the book's introduction, co-authored by Tessa and de Silva, and while appreciating the careful and subtle expositions of each paper, were anxious over the broader category of fundamentalism and about the actual existence of Buddhist fundamentalism. Nevertheless, there emerged a general consensus that the book was a must-read, not least because its papers engaged, at both a theoretical and pragmatic level, an issue of genuine importance to Sri Lankan society. Here, then, was a book whose purpose was to help to situate certain aspects of Sri Lankan Buddhism "on a larger map of movements analyzed by scholars of religion and politics" (p. 1) and which sought

to help, through the elucidation of past and present habits of identification and discrimination, to clarify difficult aspects of the current state of affairs in Sri Lanka. In Tessa's two independent contributions to this volume, she examined two significant transformations in Sri Lanka's Christian communities (like all the essays in Buddhist Fundamentalism, Tessa's is scrupulous in stressing the high degree of diversity that obtains even within collective groupings): first, the Sinhalization of the Anglican Church in Sri Lanka, a process in which elements of Sri Lankan culture that were historically regarded as Buddhist (and certainly not Anglican) have come, by way of indigenization, to be reconfigured as Sinhala and therefore suitable for Sri Lankan Christianity; and, second, the conversion to Buddhism of a relatively small number of Burghers and the conceptual complications that ensue from an analysis of their simultaneous shift toward further marginalization (as Buddhist Burghers) and toward the center (as assimilated Buddhist Burghers). A more obvious specimen of research intended to point the way toward further progress is de Silva's and Tessa's, *The Role of the Sangha in the Reconciliation Process*, No. 16 in the series *A History of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Reconciliation, Reinterpretation & Reconciliation*, (Colombo: Marga Institute, 2001). There one finds a powerful argument for the importance of history and tradition (often confounded) as crucial factors in Sri Lanka's political life, an argument deployed in urging the state, and other elements in Sri Lankan society, to expend greater resources in order to enhance "the education of the *sangha* and education about the *sangha*" (p. 24).

The troubles in Sri Lanka never ceased to disturb Tessa, who more than once was found weeping over yet another instance of terrible news. Violence more and more claimed her attentions, out of which concern she wrote papers such as "First among equals: Buddhism and the Sri Lankan state" (in I. Harris (ed.), *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, 1999); "Women, war and peace in Sri Lanka" (in E. B. Findly (ed.), *Women's Buddhism, Buddhism's Women: Tradition, Revision, Renewal*, 2000); and, most relevant for this book, "In defense of dharma: Buddhist just-war thinkers in Sri Lanka" (*Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 6, 1999). All of these brought her to the subject of this book, by means of which she hoped, as in her collaborative undertakings with C. R. de Silva, to inform, to elucidate, and to help – and, once again, to situate an issue of Sri Lankan society "on a larger map of movements analyzed by scholars of religion and politics."

The present volume was accepted for publication before Tessa knew she was dying. During her final months it was only with difficulty that she could concentrate on revision – she felt that the book was too repetitive in parts and there were places in which she would have liked to refine her argument somewhat further – and after the unexpected collapse of her mother, who died suddenly in the arms of Tessa and her father, she was unable to continue with her academic work. Which means that any subsequent revisions have been limited to simple corrections and formatting, because it was impossible to be certain of precisely what changes Tessa would have made in her final version. That we have the book at all, signpost and target that it is (and *that* Tessa would have had no other way), is thanks to the

professionalism and decency of Jonathan Price and to the editors of this series, Charles Prebish and Damien Keown. A debt is also owed to the Department of Religion at the Florida State University.

So what remains? After this book, there are a very few pieces, already in press, still to come. And there are also a couple of unpublished papers, one on elements of anti-feminism in American Buddhism, the other dealing with the preservation of difference and marginal status in the writings of feminist and gay American Buddhists. But after these, silence. In a very brief career – too brief – Tessa has given us an ample body of work (there are scholars who retire having written less). How much more would she have taught us? At the time of her death, Tessa had already undertaken a new research project: the Sri Lankan diaspora in North America, another examination of marginalities and assimilation. She had secured her first grant in support of her research and had conducted interviews at Buddhist temples in Tampa, Houston, and Los Angeles. In fact, she had already presented certain preliminary conclusions in a paper entitled "Sri Lankan monks and Sri Lankan identity in the diaspora," which she delivered to the Southeastern Conference of the Association of Asian Studies in January 2001. But that book, to which she looked forward as a happier undertaking than the writing of this one, will remain unwritten. At least it will not be written by Tessa. Nor will any of the other books, the ideas for which she carried around in her head, each one awaiting its turn. The loss is indescribable. But it is the consolation of a scholar's life that her published works will persist in speaking for her, will continue to inform and inspire others, so long as they are read. Even when there is no-one yet alive who can remember the sound of her voice or the sparkle of her smile, there will always be her data, her analysis, her bold invention and her affectionate, intelligent engagement with Buddhism and Sri Lankan society or – truer to Tessa – with Buddhists and the people of Sri Lanka. *Ergo etiam cum me supremus adederit ignis, vivam, parsque mei multa superestes erit.*

Jeff Tatum

EDITORS' PREFACE

It would be hard to imagine any budding scholar of Theravāda Buddhism reading through the translations and books of the early champions of the Pāli Text Society – Thomas W. Rhys Davids, Hermann Oldenberg, Isaline Horner, and others – without wondering at least a bit what it was like to live in those times of exciting enquiry, and musing about the interesting and colorful characters that dotted the landscape of Theravādin studies. In perhaps fifty years' time, aspiring Theravādin scholars will focus on an entirely new cast of characters: Richard Gombrich, Donald Swearer, Frank Reynolds, Charles Hallisey, and – we expect – Tessa Bartholomeusz.

We accepted Tessa Bartholomeusz's book *In Defense of Dharma: Just-War Ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka* before she knew she was dying. Previously, we had been delighted to have published her article of the same name in the 1999 volume of the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*. That initial publication began a dialogue that continued up until her death in 2001.

In a discipline that has given birth not only to brilliant scholars but also to colorful and unusual personalities, Tessa took her place amongst the kindest and most generous colleagues of Buddhist studies. Her training and scholarship were impeccable and her compassion was contagious. In the decade between the completion of her PhD and her death, her work became a benchmark for exhilarating studies of Theravāda. Her first book, *Women Under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka,* will remain a landmark study for generations, as will many of her articles.

Near the end of her life, Tessa was working on the Sri Lankan diaspora in North America, having conducted interviews at Theravādin temples in Tampa, Houston, and Los Angeles. It is our hope that this work will be continued by others, expanding the dimensions of Tessa's legacy to the scholarly community she loved.

Not too many years ago at an annual American Academy of Religion meeting, we happened to be sitting at a table adjacent to where Tessa was sharing lunch with Charlie Hallisey. As they talked and laughed through their meal, one could not help but notice the professional camaraderie, mutual respect, and joy of

intellectual sharing. It was a great lesson for us, and for Buddhist studies. She will be greatly missed.

Yathā'pi rahado gambhīro
        vipasanno anāvilo
Evaṃ dhammāni sutvāna
        vipassīdanti paṇḍitā

Damien Keown
Charles Prebish

PREFACE

The "Sinhala Army Song" graces the final pages of the 1999 commemorative volume of the fiftieth anniversary of the Sri Lankan Army (*Sri Lanka Army, 50 Years On: 1949–1999*, 1999, p. 918). According to this publication, the song was composed by a Buddhist monk, Rambukkana Siddhartha Thero. In view of the identity and vocation of its author and inasmuch as it reflects many of the themes that I explore in the pages that follow, it is worth reproducing the song in full here (in an English translation by C. R. de Silva and myself):

> Circled by the Ocean, this is my Motherland,
> My land, like a carpet of pearls,
> Let's protect her forever, serve her forever, serving by sacrificing our lives,
> Let's protect her.
> Let's dedicate ourselves to the task of leading all the people of Lanka
> who are like gems and gold.
> Let us, by sacrificing our lives, create a world of flowers
> for the sons and daughters born in our Motherland.
> Linked by love of the [Buddhist] religion and protected by the Motherland,
> brave soldiers you should go hand in hand.
> Let us put our shoulders together to make a golden world filled with peace
> and linked together by friendship.
> Let us look after the village settlements, picking flowers from the tank beds.
> Let us all protect this land of pearls and gold where cool breezes blow.

Even a cursory reading of the "Army Song" must leave us with the perhaps uncomfortable realization that, in the Sri Lankan Buddhist context, not all monks oppose defensive war. Nor can we assume from the start that religion and warfare are in every circumstance antithetical. Though the poem was published in 1999, the relationship between the defense of one's country and Buddhism is not new: it allowed for a Buddhist monk, as "chaplain," to be inducted into the army in the early 1950s, when the Venerable Dr Induruwe Pannatissa Thero was commissioned as an army captain ("A Bikkhu for the army to ensure good morals and principles," *Dinamina* (Sinhala), 27 February 1951). Yet, in my 1998 interview with the very

helpful Brigadier Sunil Tennekoon (who, according to the Army's commemorative volume "coordinated and directed" the "Army Song"), he insisted that the army has little, if any, relationship with Buddhism (I discovered the song long after returning to the USA and so was not able to ask him about it directly); in fact, he was adamant on this point. How to reconcile the way in which Sri Lankan Buddhism is regularly *presented* with the way in which Buddhism is actually *experienced* "on the ground," so to speak, is the *raison d'être* of this book – especially as the war in Sri Lanka is so often justified by resort to a religious idiom.

The war in Sri Lanka has captured much attention in recent years and is often the subject of news reports, magazine articles, and documentaries. It has even been fictionalized by none other than the highly acclaimed and award-winning Sri Lankan-born novelist Michael Ondaatje in his book *Anil's Ghost* (2000). My book is similarly inspired by recent events in Sri Lanka and is based on research that I conducted in Sri Lanka during the summer months of 1997 and 1998, funded by an American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies Fellowship and a Florida State University Faculty Development Grant. I am deeply indebted to my research assistants Ms Asha Abeyasekera and Ms Yashodara Sarachchandara, both of whom arranged meetings for me with prominent Buddhist monks and laity, politicians and scholars; they also conducted a good many of the interviews. Moreover, they patiently read through dusty documents at the Sri Lankan National Archives and the Sri Lankan National Library that were critical for my work. I owe a special debt of gratitude to the staff of those libraries, as well as to the administrators of the Young Men's Buddhist Association, Colombo, who have granted me many privileges over the past decade, including the use of their library. I am also very grateful to Kumari Jayawardena of the Social Scientists Association, Colombo, for sponsoring my research and for her abiding friendship and hospitality. My family in Sri Lanka, as always, were very helpful and gracious during my stays in Colombo; I shall never be able to thank them properly for their kindness. And no-one compares to Ms Sutami Ratnavale, who has provided me with the best home away from home during my recent research periods in Colombo; she is a great friend. I would like also to acknowledge Mark Froehlich, who painstakingly labored over the bibliography, and Vinod Rubins, who assisted me during the final editing process, both of whom are my students at Florida State University.

I have benefited immensely from the careful readings by many scholars of portions of this work. John Kelsay, my colleague in the Department of Religion at Florida State University, whose own work on Islam and war has inspired me, read through various drafts of the entire book and made very valuable suggestions; he also granted me release time from teaching in the fall of 1998 that allowed me to begin writing the book. Aline Kalbian, also at Florida State University, read through Chapter 1; her imprint is on its pages. Other colleagues elsewhere, including Charles Hallisey, John Kemper, Chandra R. de Silva, and Jonathan Walters, all read Chapter 1 and offered suggestions for improvement; Donald Lopez read and commented upon Chapters 1–3. I am very grateful to each of them for their time

and thoughtful remarks, and I have tried to address as many of their queries as possible without compromising what I believe to be the thesis of the book – namely, that Buddhists, not unlike other religious peoples, justify defensive war if certain conditions are met.

During my 1997 and 1998 field studies in Sri Lanka, my discussions with Buddhists, many of whom gave very generously of their time, helped me to articulate the arguments that I present in this book. Though I often met with much resistance, I also met with much more encouragement and support than I could ever have expected, even from Buddhist monks who disagreed with me. Because I had previously interviewed many Sri Lankans, including members of the *sangha*, for my book *Women under the Bo Tree* (1994), and also for some of the essays that I wrote for a volume I edited with Chandra R. de Silva, *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka* (1998), I had already developed strong relationships with Sri Lankans that allowed me to ask tough questions of some notable Buddhists. I think that many monks, and many politicians, in particular, respected my tenacity; I certainly came to respect their resolve, even though I shall never be able to endorse the points of view of certain among them.

A book such as this, which challenges our assumptions about Buddhism, widely held to be the most pacific of all the world's religions, is not easy to write. Though I shall defer full discussion of the problems associated with such a study until the middle of Chapter 1, I should like to say here that writing about war and Buddhism in the context of Sri Lanka, where some sixty thousand people since 1983 have lost their lives in ethnic strife, is very depressing, heart-wrenching, and frustrating. The atrocity of the war was brought home to me recently as I read through a publication of the Sri Lankan Army that commemorates its fiftieth anniversary, particularly because over two hundred of its pages are devoted to listing the names of the 10,688 soldiers who have died since 1983 (as of June 1999, its publication date) in the government's war against the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam); the list does not even include those who are officially "missing in action," nor those serving in the Sri Lankan Air Force and Navy who have lost their lives. It is my hope that, by tackling the subject of Buddhism and war, I may be able to contribute something to our understanding of how Sri Lankans have justified their resort to violence and why.

There have been many stumbling blocks in the Sri Lankan peace process, which always seems crippled, and in the writing of this book. Yet, I am cautiously optimistic about Sri Lanka's future, particularly because in early 2000 the two major political parties in Sri Lanka agreed to work together for a resolution to the protracted civil war. Anyone who has visited Sri Lanka, or who, like me, has had the great fortune to conduct research there, knows that Sri Lankans are resilient; like others who have known war, Sri Lankans have learned to carry on despite the difficulties in their country. And though, as is obvious, most Sri Lankans are not on the battlefield actually engaging in war, most lives nevertheless are torn asunder by the crisis in this tiny island nation. During most of the writing of this book,

while countless bombs took countless lives in Sri Lanka, I encountered difficulties of my own, though they do not compare to the hardships of many whom we shall meet in the following pages. I have been succored by my family, both in the USA and abroad, and particularly by my parents. In conclusion, I wish also to mention the affection of my dear friends, some of whom are colleagues, who cheerfully and optimistically steered me through those difficulties, especially Fran, Larry, Cathy, David, Aline, Bob, John, Kathleen, and Daniel, all of Tallahassee; there are many, many others, who live elsewhere, including my childhood friends, and C.R., Daya, Meena, Anne S., and Vijay, who, though far away, are always in some sense nearby. I am grateful to Dr James E. Martin, Tallahassee, who is just what a physician should be. And words fail to express my gratitude to Dr Daylene Ripley of Shands Hospital, Gainesville. Above all, I would like to acknowledge Jeff Tatum, who knows far more about Buddhism than he ever bargained for and who makes life fun, even though he's a very fine scholar. With admiration and love, I dedicate this book to him.

1

NARRATIVE, ETHICS, AND WAR[1]

Introduction: method and scope of the study

Can war ever be just? This question has been asked in cultures as diverse as the USA and Iraq, in the past as well as the present, and has been answered in a variety of ways. Not only has this question been asked in specific cultural contexts, eliciting manifold responses, it has also been asked by international bodies comprising representatives from nations that, in the post-World War II era, have pushed for international laws governing military conflict. As scholars have made plain, international law regarding war, which prevails in cultures with and without a historical legacy of Christianity, has its origin in Christian ideas about military conflict. That is to say, international law tends to look back to Christian arguments about valid reasons for war as well as what constitutes proper conduct in war.[2] Outside of Europe and the Americas, international laws about war have been assimilated (and sometimes rejected) by cultures that have different historical legacies and assumptions from the Christian West. For instance, although some Muslims spurn international law because of its connection to Christianity and thus to the West (which is perceived as an enemy of Islam), it is none the less the case that, in many Muslim cultures, international law and internal discourses on war "coexist as complementary systems."[3]

A similar case can be made for Buddhist Sri Lanka. Despite the Buddhist heritage of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), some Sri Lankans embrace international law, notwithstanding (or, perhaps, because of) its association with the Christian West. Indeed, it is not unusual to read essays in the local newspapers on the relationship between Sri Lankan and international law.[4] As much was true a hundred years ago as it is today. For instance, in 1892 A. E. Buultjens, the Buddhist editor of a Ceylon Buddhist magazine, in a retrospective on Buddhism under the British, pointed out that "war, for the purpose of conquest and domination, has been defended in the rules of international jurisprudence, only when permanent good can be introduced where anarchy and tyranny heretofore prevailed."[5] Of course, Buultjens' point was that no permanent good had issued from Ceylon's domination by the British, and thus it was time for the latter to go. In making his point, Buultjens called his readers' attention to what he perceived to be an international criterion for waging a legitimate war, that is, just cause. In the present context of Sri Lanka,

where a civil war has been raging since 1983, and where bomb suppressers, along with other useful commodities, are advertised regularly in the local papers,[6] international laws on war continue to coexist with local ideas about military conflict. To illustrate the former, when, in 1998, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lakshman Kadirgamar, delivered a speech at the commissioning parade of the Sri Lanka Military Academy, he alluded to international laws and the young cadets' obligation to uphold them, especially in their war-torn country:

> the armed forces have to make an effort … to observe the distinction – the difficult line – between combatants and non-combatants. We are fighting not merely to vanquish an enemy, we are fighting ultimately to build a lasting peace in our country.

In Minister Kadirgamar's view, the goal of peace is a just cause for war, a war in which non-combatants must be protected, also a concern of international law.[7] In short, as the Minister's views suggest, international just-war criteria permeate contemporary political rhetoric in Sri Lanka.

In addition to underscoring the criteria of just cause and the protection of civilians, Minister Kadirgamar directly referred to international laws regulating war:

> It is internationally agreed that modern conflicts should be governed by certain rules. While it is universally recognized that the armed forces of a state have a duty to protect and assert the sovereignty of the state, they also have a duty to protect the human rights of non-combatant civilians. The line between combatants and non-combatants is clearly drawn in international law.[8]

As we shall see later in this study, Minister Kadirgamar contextualized his discussion of international law within a discussion of Arjuna, the warrior hero of the *Bhagavad Gita*, a classical Hindu text,[9] and not within Buddhism. Yet his speech suggests the degree to which religious stories (as well as international norms) shape discussions about war in contemporary Sri Lanka.

In addition to having a foundation in international law, contemporary thought on military conflict in Buddhist Sri Lanka is also based on ancient Buddhist ethical stories, the morals of which are debated, and have relevance, in the present. When Sri Lankan Buddhists ask questions about war, they reveal many cultural assumptions based on religion, as is the case cross-culturally; Buddhists (at least in Sri Lanka), like Muslims, then, have tested international laws against their own cultural assumptions, developing distinctive types of thinking on the question of whether or not war can be justified.

Indeed, my concern here is with just-war thinking in Buddhist Sri Lanka. I should imagine that it will attract two audiences: one, interested in just-war traditions, and the other, Sri Lanka specialists. But given that both audiences may

be unfamiliar with the discussion that the other takes for granted, it may be useful to begin with a familiar line of thinking as it is expressed on a familiar turf – that is, the idea of "just war" in the USA.

In the spring of 1999, as US politicians, including President Clinton, debated NATO's war with Yugoslavia over Kosovo, they appealed to well-embedded European cultural assumptions regarding war and peace. In the debates, some politicians assumed that the evils of war can be balanced by the peace that eventually will prevail, thereby adducing a criterion of Christian just-war tradition. In doing so, and indirectly with Christian apologetics (that can be traced to the writings of St Ambrose and St Augustine, fourth- and fifth-century Church fathers), they ratified NATO's air campaigns against Slobodan Milosevic's forces. Though scholars and Christian apologists (some of whom are also scholars) have not achieved consensus on the precise formula or number of just-war criteria, often the criteria are grouped in two categories: one governs the choice to go to war, *jus ad bellum* (St Augustine's main concern); the other governs the prosecution of the war, *jus in bello*. While both categories loomed large in contemporary American political rhetoric about the crisis in Kosovo, two of the components normally categorized under *jus ad bellum* – namely just cause and proportionality – were particularly striking.

For instance, during the months that framed the Balkan crisis, reference to just cause and proportionality was overt: Senator John McCain, a former prisoner of war in Vietnam, argued on the television news program NBC's *Meet the Press* that NATO had "just cause" to go to war against Milosevic's regime, given the Serbian's agenda of ethnic cleansing aimed at eradicating ethnic Albanians from Kosovo.[10] He reiterated this claim during a Republican presidential debate in February 2000.[11] Directly referring to a feature of just-war thought – namely just cause, or the notion that there must be a very good reason to declare war – the senator defended NATO's actions. Moreover, he spoke of the "humanitarian slaughter" that must accompany such a campaign, underscoring the inevitability of the loss of life of non-combatants in wars with just cause. In other words, McCain propounded an element of Christian just-war ideology, that is, proportionality, or the criterion that, in the end, and despite loss of life, more good than evil will have been done.[12]

Echoing Senator McCain in 1999, and illustrative of the political rhetoric in the months that spanned the Balkan conflict in 1999, MSNBC's *Equal Time* program entitled its 2 April episode, "Is this a just war?" CNN's *Crossfire* program followed a few days later with a debate between a US ethnic Albanian and a US Serb regarding the province of Kosovo and its religious and historical significance for those who contest it;[13] of course, for the former, defense of Kosovo – of religious significance to ethnic Albanians – constituted just cause for war. President Clinton, too, in a newspaper editorial, framed NATO's war against Milosevic with the rhetoric of just cause: Milosevic, after all, was guilty of "singling out whole peoples for destruction because of their ethnicity and faith." Therefore, Americans had every reason to participate in, and even lead, NATO's war, for religious freedom

must be defended. Moreover, in his editorial, entitled "A just and necessary war," Clinton wrote that "we had to act," that NATO was left with no alternative but to engage in war: "When the violence in Kosovo began in early 1998, we exhausted every diplomatic avenue for a settlement." Here, Clinton alludes to an important feature of the *jus ad bellum*: the idea of war as "last resort."

Clinton, McCain, and the others, living in an era that has established public international laws governing war, formulated their ideas in relationship to those laws. As scholars of just war tell us, however, it is also the case that those laws, no matter how much they have been purged of features that may reflect their origin, are based on Christian thought about organized military conflict. In short, Christian just-war thinking, taken for granted in modern US politics and in international law, is a persuasive narrative for the defense of certain US values, not the least among them, religious freedom (in the USA and abroad).

Thus, in regard to the USA's involvement in NATO's war against Milosevic, we find that an understanding of the USA's religiously rooted values is indispensable for comprehension of US political and military action. In fact, as Clinton's written ideas on the Balkan crisis suggest, the idea and practice of just-war US style cannot be separated from the religious sphere, no matter how much US citizens may resist a conflation of the religious and the political. Arguing for a resort to war, in part to defend what are taken to be fundamental religious rights, President Clinton testifies to an American cultural assumption regarding war and its justification.

At the same time, it must be noted that, during the Balkan crisis, some US politicians argued that the war against Milosevic was not entirely just. Jesse Jackson, reverend and politician, who led a mission to Yugoslavia to free three US soldiers held captive there, advanced the idea that the bombing of Yugoslavia was not the proper course of action to impede Milosevic's campaign of ethnic cleansing. Though during the Balkan crisis Jackson conceded that "there are morally just wars,"[14] he also pleaded the case that diplomacy, and not bombing, had the best chance of achieving NATO's stated goals. Given the number of civilians who had died during NATO's bombing campaigns, i.e. "collateral damage (I detest that bloodless term!),"[15] Jackson urged that we give peace a chance. Moreover, he pointed out that, inasmuch as Milosevic had been thoroughly demonized in the US press, it was easy for NATO's forces to target him and his supporters for, after all, "we don't negotiate with demons, we exorcise them."[16] As we shall see in the pages that follow, the process of demonization to which Jackson refers, an inevitable aspect of war, is an oft-repeated theme in contemporary Sri Lankan political and religious rhetoric about war and its justification.

Jackson challenged many Americans' assumptions – that some organized conflicts are necessary and righteous, in this specific case, the USA's involvement in NATO's war against Milosevic – by appealing to the very religion that imbues contemporary US just-war thinking: Christianity.[17] Thus, as the competing narratives regarding the justice of the conflict in Kosovo suggest, Americans debate

the dominant framework for Christian thinking about war, testing it for its applicability in real situations.

Like contemporary Americans, whose views on war (whether for or against) are underwritten by a just-war tradition that is essentially and historically Christian, some Sri Lankans engage the narratives of Buddhism as they debate the war in Sri Lanka. And like US politicians who supported NATO recently in the Balkan crisis, Sinhala Sri Lankans test their justifications for war against counter-narratives in the very religion that ratifies their resort to war. In other words, some Sri Lankans propose that war can be justified if certain criteria are met, whereas others (re)present a narrative thread of Sri Lankan Buddhism that advances that one should never resort to violence. In short, in Sri Lanka, as in the USA, ideas about war are contested with moral theories, based on religion, that are assumed to be true. In the case of Sri Lanka, however, reflection upon religion and religious narratives to bolster moral theories about war is more directly articulated than in US just-war rhetoric. In other words, while their US counterparts reflect on the just-war criteria that, themselves, are inextricably tied to religion, Sri Lankan politicians and others, as we shall see in the pages that follow, cite religious narratives and stories as they grapple with the criteria that provide for justified war. In Sri Lanka, then, religious narratives are directly invoked, the sub-texts of which are offered as types of just-war thinking; in the USA, more often than not, religious narratives are indirectly invoked by way of direct reference to the just-war criteria.

The difference in orientation toward religion in the USA and Sri Lanka in regard to just-war thinking in part may be accounted for by competing notions of secularism. Although, as we have seen from our look at the debates about the Balkan crisis, the religious and political spheres in the USA can overlap, nevertheless Americans have historically resolved that the government must not interfere in matters relating to religion. In short, in response to their constitutional heritage, Americans have resisted an overt blending of religion and politics. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, as it has evolved as an independent nation-state since 1948, has produced a unique type of secularism, enshrined in its later constitutions, that privileges Buddhism while accommodating secular ideology. For instance, the most recent Sri Lankan constitution grants Buddhism "the foremost place", and at the same time it protects all the religions of the island and guarantees freedom of religion.[18] In this "Buddhist secularism,"[19] specifically local concerns, based on religion, are wedded to ideas that link Sri Lanka's present to its colonial past, which has its own secular heritage. To illustrate, by the middle of 1998, the government of Sri Lanka (elected in 1994 under the leadership of Chandrika Kumaratunga) had spent SLRs 1,485 million (rupees) "to foster, protect [the] Sasana," that is, Buddhism.[20] This goes to illustrate that the neat binary categories, religious/political, that scholars have come to expect, must be called into question in the Sri Lankan context: the particular type of secularism that is proposed by the Sri Lankan constitution takes for granted that religion and politics are intertwined. Indeed, though Kumaratunga is assumed to be a secularist,[21] she nonetheless has

promised constitutional protection (in her proposed constitution) of a Supreme Advisory Council (Uttarithara Bauddha Upadeshaka Mandalaya), which comprises twenty Buddhist monks. (The monks, however, resigned in 1997 because, despite Kumaratunga's patronage of Buddhism and of them, they consider her to be weak on "stopping anti-Buddhist activities in the country."[22])

Here it is instructive to note that India, too, has developed a notion of secularism, "different from the Western one, in which the state, rather than excluding religion from politics, is exhorted to be evenhanded in its dealings with multiple coexisting religions that give direction to the lives of their adherents."[23] As much is true of Sri Lanka, where, for instance, when the opposition party, the United National Party (UNP), met in 1998 to discuss strategies to contest the next election, the "Executive Committee decided to meet the religious heads and explain matters to them." They went first to consult with the "Nayaka Theras," that is, the chief Buddhist monks of the island; then they visited Christian clergy, followed by a meeting with the Hindu religious dignitaries. "M. H. Mohammed pointed out the question does not arise in relation to Islam because there is no Muslim religious dignitary in the country."[24] This specifically Sri Lankan orientation toward religious pluralism is further articulated in the present government's patronage of religion. In 1998, for instance, when seventy percent of the SLRs 100 million allocated to promote religions and culture was earmarked for Buddhist schools, the remaining thirty percent was distributed among Hindu, Catholic, and Muslim religious schools,[25] reflecting the fact that roughly seventy percent of the island's population is Buddhist, while the remaining thirty percent comprises Hindus, Christians, and Muslims.[26] Notwithstanding the evenhandedness, the Sri Lankan state, unlike India, which is also home to each of the world's major religious traditions, privileges one – namely, Buddhism – above the others in its constitution.

Sri Lanka and secularism: implications for issues of justice in war

What does Sri Lanka's use and application of secularism mean for our discussion of just-war thinking? Here, I shall stand "on the shoulders of many others to put together my narrative,"[27] to quote Stanley Tambiah (whose work on violence we shall examine later, for it is relevant to this discussion of war in Sri Lanka). As James Turner Johnson has made clear, just-war thinking, at least as it has been shaped in Europe, has been directly influenced by the development of the secular nation-state. For Johnson, the demise of the universal and overarching authority of the church, now vested in states or territorial regimes, signifies "the inversion and redefinition of the relation between church and state," resulting in new thinking about war in Europe, especially war for religion. In the inversion, which had taken place by the sixteenth century, "the character and rule of the state was no longer subject to right religion, rather the character of right religion for a given domain was determined by the state."[28] Thus, religious authority over the affairs of the state was undermined, which meant that, in the long run:

> Both in theory and in the practice of states the legitimate causes for war were redefined in terms of the state's natural and historical rights – in particular, the rights of sovereignty and territoriality. Defense of religion was still permitted, but only as a function of these core rights; offensive war for the sake of religion was consensually erased from the picture.[29]

As a result mainly of the shift of power from church to territory, offensive war, justified by religion and ratified by God, became known as holy war, whereas defensive war (with bodies of moral and legal rules for conduct dating back to St Augustine and others but refined in later centuries), declared by nation-states to protect rights (including religious ones), was defined as just.

In the example of Kosovo, we have noted that Clinton and others justified the USA's involvement in NATO's war against Milosevic in part by appealing to its legacy of the practice and theory of war as it relates to the defense of US values, such as the protection of religious freedom and territory. Thus, the USA's commitment to the defense of the Kosovars and their rights may be viewed along a European continuum of thinking about war, bequeathed to NATO, that is inextricably linked to the rise of secularism and the dominance of the state over the religious realm. Of course, I am not implying that "advanced" societies have left behind medieval ideas about religion, along with other obsolete definitions of law and state. Rather, on the contrary, I am suggesting that linear narratives of the rise of secularism have the potential to fail in capturing the texture of the complicated relationship between religion and polity in the USA, just as Clinton's expression of the crisis in Kosovo in religious terms reveals.

Sri Lanka presents a different picture than the USA, albeit one in which a symbiotic relationship between religion and polity mark both the present and the past. Like Islamic culture, which has resisted (or, according to Johnson, "not developed") an "indigenous normative division between the secular and sacred spheres," the modern Sri Lankan state's self-understanding includes a responsibility to foster religion[30]. At the same time, the religious sphere, the symbolic authority of which is the order of Buddhist monks, the *sangha*, legitimates political power, that is, those who govern as well as their politics.[31] In this symbiotic relationship between religious authority and temporal government, we do not find parallels in Europe's experience, neither to the pretense of spiritual authority over temporal affairs nor to its inversion. Rather, modern Sri Lanka has adjusted to a historical legacy in which, prior to the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815, "it was the monarch's unique role as defender and promoter of the Buddhist religion which in the final analysis confirmed his legitimacy."[32] In this equation, moreover, it is significant that "the Kandyans held that the king had to be the custodian of the Dalada, the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha." It is equally significant that "wars fought for the political domination are conceived as wars for the capture of the Dalada."[33] As we shall see in Chapter 5, despite the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom, and the development of a distinctive form of secularism, relic veneration (such as of the Tooth Relic) continues to inform politics and thinking on war in the present.

Indeed, in the present, Sri Lanka's Buddhist secularism is a compromise between the expectation that those who govern (Sri Lanka is now a democratic socialist republic) will protect Buddhism, and Enlightenment notions about religion. The tension between the *sangha* and the state provides for uniquely Sri Lankan discourses about war and religion that are the subject of this study.

Sinhala Buddhism and myth models

The degree to which Buddhist patterns of thought – political, religious, and cultural – are internalized by ordinary Sri Lankans, including politicians, monks, schoolteachers, and others, is open to debate. Following Clifford Geertz, in this study I shall explore the "scope" of those Buddhist patterns, that is, "the degree to which the determinate meaning of a particular pattern of thought or social practice does indeed resonate throughout a cultural whole."[34] In the case of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, when we contrast the scope of Buddhist patterns with their force, following Geertz, we find that many Buddhist ideas on war, normally embodied by myths and stories, are thoroughly internalized, especially as they relate to convictions about war (notwithstanding the fact that interpretations of those stories differ). Thus, there is not a monolithic cultural discourse in Sri Lanka when it comes to war (or anything, for that matter). Indeed, here, I take for granted the idea, summed up eloquently by Gloria Goodwin Raheja and Ann Grodzins Gold, that cultural patterns are negotiated, dynamic, and changing. Moreover:

> If we begin to view culture not as a single totalizing discourse but as a universe of discourse and practice in which competing discourses may contend with and play off each other … we might then begin to interpret experience and subjectivity not in terms of a single, incarcerating mode of thought, but in terms of multiply voiced, contextually shifting, and often strategically deployed readings of the social practices we seek to explicate.[35]

In this book, I am concerned with the ways in which Buddhist Sri Lankan discourses about war – internalized, contested, disputed, deployed, and directly linked to Buddhist moral narratives and stories – present themselves when Buddhists make ethical decisions about war.

Here, inasmuch as this study will pay attention to war and its justification (or denouncement) in moral stories, it may be useful to employ more general considerations of ethics as they relate to behavior and religious narratives, a field of enquiry in which scholars of Christianity have taken the lead. For instance, Stanley Hauerwas has called attention to the role that cultural and religious narratives (or stories) play – whether of the Nuer or of the Christian – in shaping the moral decisions that individuals make. For Hauerwas, attention to narratives will not reveal that moral judgments are "relative." On the contrary, the isolation of narratives that drive moral judgments "shows that the kind of quandaries we

confront depend on the kind of people we are and the way we have learned to construe the world through our language, habits, and feelings."[36] Or, as Raheja and Gold suggest, cultural patterns and assumptions are contested.

It is important to note, however, that in Hauerwas' formulations about the power of narratives to shape morality, narratives are not expressions of individual or, for that matter, cultural ontology. That is, unlike Victor Turner, whose idea of "root paradigms," or cultural stories that impinge upon the ethical life, allows for a deep psychological, indeed pre-reflective (or ontological), response to quandaries,[37] Hauerwas (along with L. Gregory Jones) argues that ethical judgments cannot be justified "apart from the agent who finds himself or herself in the situation."[38] In other words, ethics are not simply given by the community, that is, they are not ontological or pre-reflective, but rather are formed in the relationship of a person to the community in which one claims membership. Like the anthropologist Steven Kemper, who has argued that, in the Sri Lankan context, stories do not work on people without their knowledge,[39] Hauerwas maintains that actors in ethical predicaments test stories for their efficacy.

Indeed, though, according to Hauerwas, each one of us makes moral decisions that exhibit the "narrative that forms [our] community's understanding of its basic purpose,"[40] he asserts that, while we are driven by narratives, such narratives [must] remain open to internal and external challenges. Referring to casuistry, or the process of a community "to test imaginatively the often unnoticed and unacknowledged implications of its narrative commitments,"[41] Hauerwas argues also that the individual and the community exist in tension. In that tension, those pledged "to embody" the stories of the community[42] – those who live religious ideology as related through narratives – test traditions and adjudicate cultural and religious assumptions, providing the space for competing ethical responses within one given community. For, according to Hauerwas, "what we actually possess are various and sometimes conflicting stories that provide us with the skills to use certain moral notions."[43]

Hauerwas' project is constructive; his aim is to "call attention to the manner in which [Jesus'] story teaches us to know and do what is right under definite conditions,"[44] a calling unrelated to this study. Yet, though we may set aside Hauerwas' primary goal, we nevertheless can heed his request to understand the way religious narratives shape a community's morality and vice versa. This study takes advantage of Hauerwas' point of view, inasmuch as it establishes the significance of narrative for ethical reflection and is concerned with the narratives that constitute a particular ethical dilemma in a particular culture: the defense (or the "defense") of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, where the majority population, the Sinhalas, who are predominantly Buddhist, are at war with a separatist faction within the largest minority, the Tamils, who are predominantly Hindu. I do not mean to imply that the parties in the conflict are monolithic ethnic groups, whose religious identities fully account for orientations toward war and peace. Indeed, as E. Valentine Daniel has so aptly demonstrated, and as C. R. de Silva and I attempted to show in our study of religious fundamentalism in Sri Lanka, ethnic

categories there remain in flux, although religion is only one dimension of identity.[45] Yet here I am interested in the role of religion in the formulation of identity, particularly as that identity relates to constructions of pacifism and violence. Thus, I use expressions such as Sinhala Buddhist (or Tamil Hindu) with caution,[46] and with full awareness that, first, there are plenty of Sinhala and Tamil people for whom religion is an insignificant feature of identity and, second, there are plenty of Sinhalas and Tamils who are Christian. Nevertheless, the deployment of a "strategic essentialism,"[47] of a category such as "Sinhala Buddhist," will prove fruitful here, for it will allow us to see that there are dominant discourses within Sri Lanka that allow for justified war, and that those justifications are based on "Buddhist" stories and are promoted by "Sinhala" people. Such study will reveal that, while there is a narrative thread in Sri Lankan Buddhist history and in contemporary rhetoric that endorses radical pacifism, there are interpretations of Buddhist stories which argue that, for the defense of Buddhism – that is, of the dharma[48] – war is permissible, even necessary, under certain conditions. Moreover, inasmuch as the data suggest that Sinhala Buddhists have taken (and take) full advantage of the range of resources available to them to legitimate their ethical stances on war[49] – namely, canonical and post-canonical stories – this study aims to demonstrate that enquiry into the full heritage of Sinhala-Buddhist ethics should not be limited to a survey of the Pali canon.[50]

Many interpreters of Sri Lankan (Sinhala) Buddhism have paid attention solely to the canonical narrative of pacifism, thus prompting us to accept that imagined and ultra-pacific Buddhism as the real one. This is as true of the European scholar as it is of the Sri Lankan. For instance, the Venerable Palane Siri Vajiranana (1878–1955), a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk scholar and founding superior of Vajirarama, one of the most influential Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka, writing in 1940 during World War II, urged pacifism as he cited H. Fielding Hall's *The Soul of a People*:

> There can never be a war of Buddhism. No ravished country has ever borne witness to the prowess of the followers of the Buddha; no murdered men have poured out their blood on their hearth-stones, killed in his name; … He and His Faith are clean of the stain of blood. He was the preacher of the Great Peace, of love, of charity, of compassion, and so clear in His teaching that it can never be misunderstood.[51]

(The monk scholar continued his analysis of Buddhism by shoring up his argument with countless texts from the Pali canon on peace.) For the Venerable Palane Vajiranana, as well as for Hall, Buddhism never has allowed – nor ever will allow – for the possibility of war: the example of the Buddha's life, as well as the Buddha's teachings, prove as much. There are no two ways about it.

The Venerable Palane Vajiranana's construction of pacific Buddhism must be viewed in the light of the intellectual world in which he lived, a world in which, for roughly one hundred years, Christians and Buddhists in Sri Lanka had argued over the merits of their respective religions vis-à-vis the relationship between

religion and violence. As H. L. Seneviratne has demonstrated,[52] the venerable monk was a witness to the development of a "Euro-Buddhist canon," invented by indologists in the late nineteenth century. Ironically, this canon "came to dominate and guide the religio-nationalist resurgence in the homelands of Buddhism colonized by western powers,"[53] including Sri Lanka. Buddhists, for their part, contributed to the canon by a process of comparative missiology, in which contrasts were drawn between Buddhism and Christianity that proved the worth of the former. For instance, in an 1891 example of this comparative missiology, one Buddhist related that war is an important component of Christianity: "The slaughter of the innocents formed a fitting augury of the development of a religion of blood and war which has been established in the name of 'the Prince of Peace',"[54] that is, Jesus. Buddhist history, on the other hand, was represented in the 1891 example as being void of war and bloodshed. This comparative analysis continues to the present; today, some Buddhists go so far as to claim that Christianity underwrites terrorism in Sri Lanka. For instance, according to one Buddhist:

> There is ample evidence to show that the Christian Church covertly or overtly encourages LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] terrorism and is a serious obstacle to ethnic peace.[55]

As we shall see in Chapter 4 of this study, Buddhists who argue that Buddhism never permits war do so in part as a response to their own construction of Christianity as a violent religion. For them, as for the Venerable Palane Vajiranana, Buddhism is superior to Christianity because (in their view) Buddhism can never condone violence. By way of comparison, it is interesting that, as Donald Lopez has so eloquently documented, the discussion of Buddhism in the scholarly and popular literature of Tibet similarly resounds with the notion that Buddhism and its influence is the antithesis of bellicosity, notwithstanding evidence to the contrary.[56]

Textual Buddhism and its relationship to Buddhism-on-the-ground: preliminary questions

So, just what is Buddhism's relationship to violence, even to war? We might benefit from a look at textual Buddhism, particularly the Pali canon, which provides one foundation for Buddhism in Sri Lanka; we will especially want to examine various interpretations of these canonical texts, a discussion taken up in Chapter 4 of this study. Here we may simply observe that a cursory look reveals that the question of violence is directly addressed in the recorded teachings of the Buddha. Yet, the question of war, which is closely associated, by implication, with that of violence, is not thereby prompting a multiplicity of voices regarding war. For instance, in a recent evaluation of Buddhism and war, one of the greatest interpreters of Sinhala culture, the Sri Lankan anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere, argues that "in the Buddhist doctrinal tradition … there is little evidence of intolerance, no justification

for violence, no conception even of 'just wars' or 'holy wars'." In fact, Obeyesekere reinforces his claim by maintaining that "one can make an assertion that Buddhist doctrine is *impossible* to reconcile logically with an ideology of violence and intolerance."[57] Are the stories of the canon, the stories that contain the doctrines to which Obeyesekere refers, capable of another reading? As we shall see throughout this study, quite a few Sri Lankan Buddhists – monks and laity alike – have argued for a less clear-cut picture regarding doctrinal prescriptions for war and peace. Some of the Sri Lankan Buddhists I interviewed cited the very doctrinal tradition – with its rich mosaic of stories about the Buddha – that Obeyesekere argues is devoid of just-war ideology, to legitimate their point of view. Indeed, though the majority referred to post-canonical narratives, many nevertheless argued that the canon itself contains the seeds for an ideology that justifies war in certain contexts. The degree to which Buddhist canonical and post-canonical stories shape action and ideology in Sri Lanka will be ferreted out as I recount some of my interviews in the chapters that follow.

As we shall see in Chapter 2 of this study, the texts – canonical and post-canonical – lend themselves to conflicting interpretations when it comes to the subject of war. Indeed, we will meet others who, like the monk scholar Palane Vajiranana and like Obeyesekere (to use Hauerwas' term), "embody" the narrative of Buddhist pacifism, that is, who have argued that Buddhism and war are antithetical. Referring to (canonical and post-canonical) stories about the Buddha, as well as to stories of other Buddhist nobles, Sinhala Buddhists who align their religion solely with non-violence and peace represent a mainstream line of thought in Buddhist Sri Lanka. Yet, while it is obvious and indisputable that stories of pacifism in Sri Lankan Buddhism abound, there are other narratives, which, by their very nature, run counter to the foundation of Buddhist pacifism, that is, to *ahimsa*, or non-violence. These narratives, like their pacific counterparts, reflect an ethical stance. The use of such narratives of violence, especially in the period immediately preceding the assassination of prime minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in 1959, was particularly marked; at that time, Sinhalas – monks and laity alike – used Buddhist stories to argue for the defense of the Sinhalas and their religion against forces – whether Sinhala or not – inimical to Buddhism. For example, a monk, writing in 1957 to the newspaper, the *Bauddha Peramuna* – a forum for Buddhist monks and laity to air their grievances – employed a post-canonical Buddhist story of war to legitimate the appropriate use of violence. The story is the focus of much of the post-canonical, fifth-century "mytho-history" of Sri Lanka, the *Mahavamsa* (about which much has been written).[58] In fact, the monk was provoked by what he considered to be misuse of the Sri Lankan Buddhist story: he took exception to an allusion to Buddhism and war in a local paper that aligned Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike with Dutugemunu, the Buddhist hero of the *Mahavamsa*. In his editorial, the monk asks Bandaranaike "to read the Mahavamsa," and to heed its lessons:

> Dutugemunu conquered by the sword and united the land [Sri Lanka] without dividing it among our enemies [i.e. the Tamils] and established Sinhala and Buddhism as the state language and religion.[59]

In the context of (the Sinhala and presumably Buddhist) Bandaranaike's attempts at reconciliation with the Tamil minority, which included the "fair use" of the Tamil language, the monk's choice of Buddhist story underscored the prime minister's failure to protect the interests of Sinhala Buddhists. Moreover, the monk's use of the Dutugemunu story to highlight Bandaranaike's alleged injustices toward the Sinhalas was not unique. Indeed, a political opponent of Bandaranaike – namely, a Member of Parliament (MP), S. D. Bandaranayake (no relation of the prime minister) – exploited Dutugemunu's story as he strove to sway popular opinion against the government's position on the Tamils. In December 1958, soon after emergency regulations had been lifted – imposed because of the May 1958 riots between Sinhalas and Tamils in which 158 were killed[60] – MP Bandaranayake argued that "until his death he would fight to protect the rights of the Sinhalese. As in all national struggles the people of Ruhuna had given a lead and he expected them to rally round him,"[61] by which expression he alluded to the legendary homeland of Dutugemunu, thereby homologizing himself with the Buddhist warrior king of the *Mahavamsa*.

The MP's 1958 use of the story is significant for it suggests that the *Bauddha Peramuna* monk's reflection on Dutugemunu in the context of Prime Minister Bandaranaike's 1957 attempts to appease the Tamil minority's demands for protection of their language and territory (and other rights) against a vocal Sinhala (and predominantly Buddhist) opposition was shared by monk and politician alike. In sum, in the late 1950s, both politicians and monks exploited the Dutugemunu narrative to promote their view that Bandaranaike was not working in the best interests of Sinhala Buddhists. Though Bandaranaike had the support of the *sangha*, the Buddhist monks, as he campaigned in 1956 on a "Sinhala-only" policy that, to all intents and purposes, alienated the minorities, his 1957 change of heart toward the minorities, particularly the Tamils, which has been explored elsewhere,[62] enraged many monks and laity alike.

Sri Lanka: the Sacred Buddhist island?

Indeed, in 1959, the Venerable Mapitagama Buddharakkhita, a Buddhist monk whose name appeared in the media in conjunction with an ongoing discussion in the late 1950s on the propriety of monastic involvement in secular affairs,[63] assassinated Bandaranaike, ostensibly for complying with some Tamil demands. Though it is nearly impossible to know exactly what Buddharakkhita was thinking as he, along with other monks, planned Bandaranaike's assassination, it is reasonable to assume that he was guided in part by readings of the *Mahavamsa*,

particularly given the Buddhist rhetoric of his day that linked the island to the Sinhala-Buddhist people. For instance, it was not uncommon in the late 1950s to pick up the newspaper and read an article about a politician or other Buddhist notable referring to Sri Lanka as the island (*dwipa*) of the dharma – *dharmadwipa*,[64] a slogan whose ideology is enshrined in the *Mahavamsa*. To illustrate, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the wife of the prime minister, and who later became prime minister, in a series of speeches regarding education and its relationship to Buddhism, referred to Sri Lanka as *dharmadeepa* on various occasions,[65] while the Inspector General of Police (IGP) lamented that, given the 1958 riots in Sri Lanka, it is only by "a true understanding of the religion [Buddhism] both by precept and practice … that Lanka will become Dhammadwipa."[66] For both Mrs Bandaranaike and the IGP, Sri Lanka's status as *dharmadwipa* was worth preserving; for others, in the ideology about *dharmadwipa* lay the foundation for claims that the island belonged to the Sinhala-Buddhist people. In Chapters 2 and 3 of this study, we shall explore more fully the *dharmadwipa* ideology, and its impact upon the development of just-war thinking. But first we shall return to our monk correspondent of the *Bauddha Peramuna*, whose ideas capture the just-war thinking of the 1950s.

In his allusion to the great Buddhist king Dutugemunu – who, according to the *Mahavamsa*, interrupted "*damila*" suzerainty over Anuradhapura, an ancient northern kingdom of the island ruled illegitimately by the *damila* King Elara – the monk correspondent justified violence against the Tamil minority who, for him, constituted the island's "enemies," just as they did (from the monk's point of view) in Dutugemunu's day. (It is important to note that, whatever the *Mahavamsa's* meaning of the Pali word *damila*, twentieth-century interpreters of the Dutugemunu–Elara conflict translate *damila* as Tamil.[67]) In the chapters that follow, voices similar to our *Bauddha Peramuna* monk, whose ideas about war are shaped by the Dutugemunu story, will echo throughout, awakening us to something that many – whether we are Sri Lankan or not – have refused to believe – that is, that some Buddhists, not unlike Christians, Muslims, and Hindus, have justified violence, even war, if certain criteria are met. Just how Buddhist are they?

How do we characterize Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and who should speak for it?

Stanley Tambiah, one of the most important scholars of Sri Lankan Buddhism, himself a Sri Lankan by birth, in his 1992 meditation on violence in Sri Lanka, *Buddhism Betrayed?,* studied the last one hundred years of Sri Lankan history in order to answer a question posed to him by Americans: "If Buddhism preaches nonviolence, why is there so much political violence in Sri Lanka today?"[68] In fact, as Tambiah relates on the first page of his study, the question is his book's *raison d'être*; and in asking the question, Tambiah also provides a road map for finding a solution:

> The main question I shall probe is the extent to which, and the manner in which, Buddhism as a "religion" espoused by Sri Lankans in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has contributed to the current ethnic conflict and collective violence in Sri Lanka.

Capturing the complexity of the current situation in Sri Lanka, where Buddhism has been used to legitimate violence, Tambiah asks some hard-hitting questions:

> If it [Buddhism] has contributed [to collective violence], were there changes in the nature of that contribution over time? And if there have been changes, how are we to describe the changing or changed shape of Buddhism itself as a lived reality?[69]

Shifting attention away from whether Buddhism has changed,[70] and employing the strategy of Hauerwas of taking seriously religious stories and their relationship to ethics, I would like to ask a different set of questions (albeit related ones) to Tambiah's about the legitimation of violence in Buddhist Sri Lanka. While Tambiah (and Seneviratne, in a separate study[71]) charts in Sri Lankan Buddhism a new manifestation of Buddhism – a more aggressive, indeed violent one – I see both the potential for pacifism and for violence in the fabric of the stories that shape, and have shaped, Buddhism in the island. The questions guiding my study are: what sorts of Buddhist stories, if any, do Buddhist Sri Lankans employ when the dharma is perceived to be under threat? If threatened – whether from within or without – have Sri Lankan Buddhists justified battles and wars, both ideological and military? Above all, is there a "just-war" ideology, based on Buddhist narratives, that accords with the internal logic (that is, to the specific context) of Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition?

The problems associated with undertaking a study of just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka are manifold. First of all, the very phrase "just-war" leaves room for misunderstanding, especially for those readers who are unfamiliar with technical terms used by scholars of ethics. In this study, the term "just," as it relates to war, is meant to capture the license for, as well as the limits of, war in Buddhist Sri Lanka. In other words, in regard to war, what is justified – and what is not – has been determined by Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition, rather than by me. My task is to lay plain just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka and expose it to the tools used by ethicists.

The second problem intrinsic to this study is that, in the context of Sri Lanka, where the (predominantly Sinhala) government and army have been at war with Tamil separatists since 1983, a war in which thousands of people of both communities have lost their lives, discussion of just-war ideology must take place at the level of the "real," rather than of the "theoretical." Thus, I must issue a warning that has been adumbrated – namely, that the intention of this study is not to justify war, but rather to bring Buddhism (at least its Sri Lankan manifestation)

into the conversation that ethicists have been having about war and comparative religion for the past decade.

The third problem in undertaking a study such as this is that many Buddhists in Sri Lanka – themselves defenders of the dharma – have "embodied" the narrative of pacific Buddhism to such a degree that they promote Buddhist pacifism as the foundation of "real" Buddhism, while at the same time they defend Buddhism vigorously and sometimes violently.[72] Indeed, the more Sinhalas write of the pacific ideology of Buddhism, and the more they define themselves in terms of their religion, the more a radically transformed ideology, of war and its justification, emerges. As a recent volume on religion and violence has proposed, it is often the case that "violence is not necessarily the exclusive characteristic of the other but rather, and perhaps even above all, a means through which the self, whether individual or collective, is constituted and maintained."[73] According to this line of theorizing, particularly in drives for self-determination, often violence is not imposed – it does not happen *to* the actors – but rather comes to pass in the attempt to create boundaries between self and other.[74] To be sure, the ideology that has helped to justify violence in Buddhist Sri Lanka, has foreshadowed a paradise, built on past narratives, particularly *vamsa* literature, that has defined itself in opposition to violence. Yet the cultural construction of the identity of place – the island of Buddhism – defined in opposition to the violent nature of Christian Europe, paradoxically has permitted violence in defense of that identity. The role of imagined pasts, reconstructed landscapes, and homelands, and their significance as vehicles that in some sense fashion, as well as represent, collective identities, has been discussed in a number of recent works.[75] In the Sri Lankan case, particularly since the last few decades of the nineteenth century, Buddhists have imagined a past that was protected by warrior kings, legitimated by Buddhist symbolism, including the *sangha* – the monastic community – and whose violence was justified given their awesome roles in defending the pacific faith. In sum, and as we shall see throughout this study, the need to protect a pacific Buddhism can legitimate violence. And given that this study will explore Buddhist pacifism's counter narratives, it is bound to be controversial in Sri Lanka, where Sinhalas protect their religion from Western perceptions that Sri Lankan Buddhism, based on the impressions of the protracted Sinhala–Tamil civil war, is intrinsically violent.

Allow me to illustrate this third problem with a vignette from my 1997 summer fieldwork in Sri Lanka: In an interview with a renowned scholar of Pali, which I conducted in order to discover if any texts in the (Theravadin) Buddhist tradition – in his opinion – justify war, he proclaimed, while briskly ushering me out of his office, that, just as there is no theory on how to make chicken curry in the Pali canon, there is no just-war ideology! The scholar made this claim following a more cordial discussion with me of the canonical *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* (CSS), which contains early Buddhists' version of an ideal society and just ruler. Yet, when I asked him why the paradigmatic righteous king of the CSS rules without violence, but nonetheless is accompanied by a fourfold army everywhere he travels – preaching the dharma – he became annoyed. Initially intrigued by my discussion

of the text's juxtaposition of the peace-loving king (who has forsworn violence) with the sophisticated militia, as well as my query that perhaps the CSS allows for a defensive war, the scholar responded with interest. (We will return to the CSS in Chapter 2.) Yet, as our discussion developed, and as I framed my study in terms of just-war ideology, he adopted a strategy of impugning my questions on the basis of my ethnicity (Burgher Sri Lankan father, English mother, thus I am not an "authentic" Sri Lankan), nationality (American), and religious background (Anglican). Defending Sri Lankan Buddhism from Sri Lankan expatriates, including S. J. Tambiah, Gananath Obeyesekere, H. L. Seneviratne, and Michael Roberts, the professor aligned me with this illustrious group of scholars, who, according to him, have made Sri Lankan Buddhism look bad in the eyes of the rest of the world. Of course, I was thrilled that I should be lumped together with such great scholars! At the same time, I realized the degree to which ethnicity, nationality, and religion shape opinion in Sri Lanka; thus the incident also made me aware of the lenses through which my study would be read. Though, following Gyandendra Pandey, I "remain uncomfortable about what may appear as an excessive intrusion of the author's self,"[76] in the pages that follow, I must offer my personal experiences, for they have direct bearing on this study. For, during the course of my study in Sri Lanka, many of my informants – monastic and lay alike – closely scrutinized my identity as they framed their answers to my questions.[77] While I tried to subordinate my own identity to the questions I asked, the people I interviewed nonetheless challenged me on the basis of my ethnicity, nationality, religion and, sometimes, gender. In other words, and as I shall demonstrate in later chapters, this study is a clear-cut example of the way in which fieldwork (and ultimately the production of knowledge) is conditioned by the identity of the researcher.[78]

This last point about identity can be clarified further by a review of the controversy in Sri Lanka over *Buddhism Betrayed?*, Tambiah's 1992 opus. In December 1993 and January 1994, the English-medium newspapers in Sri Lanka published numerous "letters to the editor" about Tambiah and *Buddhism Betrayed?* In one such editorial, an anonymous writer, who used the pseudonym "Ch[a]uvinist," doubtless aware that some Sri Lankans – no matter their ethnicity or religion – would be offended by the point of view advanced, questioned whether Tambiah, "a Christian," should write about Buddhism. The "Chauvinist" then spelt out (what he or she considered to be) the pitfalls of a Christian writing about Buddhism: "Is it [the purpose of the book] not to ridicule and cause hatred against the Sangha [order of Buddhist monks] in the minds of the English reading public in the Western world?" The editorial proceeded to point out the perils of expatriate characterizations of Buddhism in Sri Lanka:

> We should note also how cleverly the West makes use of these expatriates conditioned, moulded and brainwashed into their way of thinking to throw mud at institutions [the *sangha*] that have stood the test of time and existed in the East for thousands of years. They would have been happier if they

> had got an expatriate Buddhist to do the job but they have done the next best thing, chosen a Tamil Christian … [79]

Thus, Tambiah, a Christian, considered by "Chauvinist" to be a pawn of the West, is further criticized on account of his ethnic (Tamil) identity.

Others went further than questioning the authority of a Tamil Christian to write about Sinhala Buddhism. According to the Venerable Sobitha Thera, a Buddhist monk who is a very vocal proponent of "finishing the war" against Tamil separatists,[80] and whom we will meet again in the pages that follow, Tambiah's "motive [in writing the book] is to justify Tamil Eelam,"[81] that is, an area in the north of the island that the separatist LTTE claims as its homeland. Inasmuch as the LTTE is considered to be a terrorist organization at both the local and international levels, the Venerable Sobitha in essence aligned Tambiah with terrorism. This alignment has been made by others, including a prominent Buddhist layman, Dr Piyasena Dissanayake,[82] one of the authors of the *Sinhala Commission Report*, published in 1998, which outlines what is perceived by the Report's witnesses as the imperiled state of both Buddhism and the Sinhala people.[83]

During the controversy over Tambiah's book, the Venerable Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thera, whom we shall also meet again, remarked that people like Tambiah were part of a wider conspiracy, the "objective of which is to wipe out Buddhism and the Sinhala race from this country [Sri Lanka]."[84] In defending the dharma, that is Buddhism – and the Sinhala people – from critics such as Tambiah, Sinhala monks and lay people alike express their concern over the condition of their religion and ethnic community which, in the present context, are inextricably intertwined.[85]

According to Nihal Fernando, a Sri Lankan observer of the controversy over Tambiah's book, it would have been impossible for Buddhist monks and laity "to hold in abeyance their knowledge of Thambiah's [*sic*] racial, religious, political and national identity" because, according to Fernando, "[t]exts … do not emerge virginally from a socio-cultural, political, and ideological vacuum … they carry the imprint of their producers' material backgrounds … and ideological orientations."[86] In other words, for Fernando, Tambiah's ethnicity, religion, and nationality have direct bearing upon what Tambiah writes. Reminding us of Stanley Fish's observations on readership,[87] Fernando argues also that the response to Tambiah is shaped by the same ideological orientations as in textual production. For Fernando, therefore, hostile reaction to *Buddhism Betrayed?* – given its writer and the Sri Lankan readership – is not surprising, especially considering that:

> At present the war being fought between Tamil terrorists and the Sri Lankan state has tragically reinscribed in the popular Sinhala imagination the anciently developed image of the Tamil as a threat to the stability and geographical integrity of the Sri Lankan state (which again from ancient times has been inextricably linked to the Buddhist order).[88]

There is no scholarly consensus on the period in which Sri Lankan national identity became linked to Buddhism,[89] and so we must, for the time being, bracket Fernando's parenthetical remark about the Sri Lankan "state." Nonetheless, Fernando brings into focus a theme of this study – namely, the power of past narratives to shape contemporary attitudes. The narrative of the threatening Tamil – inimical to Buddhism and to the Sinhala people – which, as we have already noted, permeated negative responses to Bandaranaike's change of policy toward the Tamil minority, is deeply embedded in Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. Indeed, as the Sri Lankan historian K. M. de Silva has commented, "Sri Lankan society carries a huge burden of historical memories,"[90] and the controversy over *Buddhism Betrayed?* reveals as much.[91]

Sometimes the concern over the welfare of Buddhism and the Sinhala people moves from the realm of ideological sparring, as is the case in the controversy over *Buddhism Betrayed?*, to violence, and to war and its justification. This has prompted Regi Siriwardena, another Sri Lankan observer of the "Tambiah Affair,"[92] to remark that "[t]he whole episode makes it abundantly clear that Buddhism in Sri Lanka has been betrayed, and by some of its most vocal professed defenders."[93] Notwithstanding Siriwardena's measured irony, if we employ Hauerwas' idea of narratives, and their relationship to ethics, another possible reading of the controversy emerges, that is, that the Buddhist monks' and laity's concern for the condition of the dharma, itself framed by a variety of Buddhist stories (or stories linked to Buddhism), explains the intensity of the reaction to Tambiah's 1992 book. In other words, and adding to the complexity of the issue, it can just as easily be argued that the negative response to *Buddhism Betrayed?* signals that, insofar as one narrative in Buddhist Sri Lanka centers on the protection of the dharma, Sri Lankan Buddhism has not been betrayed at all: rather, Buddhist Sri Lankans (who had an opinion about the controversy), ethically propelled to shield the dharma, enacted a Sri Lankan story of the defense of Buddhism. Put differently, given the Sri Lankan narrative of defending the dharma, Tambiah's critics' responses were not only to be expected, but were also in keeping with the internal logic of Buddhist narratives in Sri Lanka.

There is an important lesson to be learned from the Tambiah Affair. Indeed, the Tambiah Affair is itself an instantiation of the very thesis of this book – namely, that Sinhala Buddhists "embody" (to use Hauerwas' language) Sri Lankan Buddhist stories about the condition of Buddhism as they make ethical choices that relate to their role as defenders of the dharma: stories about the defense of Buddhism were fundamental to the rhetoric which revolved around the Tambiah Affair.[94] And what are these stories?

Defenders of the dharma: the Buddha, the kings, and the Sinhalas

Since the 1970s, scholarship on Sri Lanka has focused upon the *Mahavamsa* as the text that lays the foundation for the Sinhala people's claim to be the preservers

of Buddhism. Although a full and detailed account of previous scholarship need not be rehearsed here, it is worth repeating some of its major insights, for those insights are relevant to our discussion of the dharma and its defense. In a nutshell, previous research has revealed that, according to contemporary readings of the *Mahavamsa*, some Sinhalas maintain that they are the Buddha's chosen people, and that the island of Sri Lanka is the Buddhist promised land.[95] An illustration of this point of view appeared in the summer of 1998, during the ongoing controversy on the island regarding the devolution of power, which would grant Tamils in the north a measure of autonomy. According to a "letter to the editor" penned by a Sinhala, one S. Perera:

> Rome is sacred to the Catholics, so is Jerusalem to the Jews and so is Mecca to the Muslims. The tiny island in the Indian Ocean … where the Sinhalese lived for over 25 centuries … is the hallowed land of Sinhala Buddhists.[96]

Though the letter does not directly refer to the *Mahavamsa*, it reiterates a claim made by many who explicitly cite the text – that "every sq. mm of this island is sacred to the Sinhalese."[97] For the letter writer, Sri Lanka is a sacred island because the Buddha, by word and by deed, declared it to be so. As we shall see below, according to the *Mahavamsa*, the Buddha made three magical trips to Sri Lanka, each time colonizing another area of the island, in preparation for the formal introduction of Buddhism two centuries after his death. Thus, Perera's view – based on readings of the *Mahavamsa* – that the entire island is the sacred home of the Sinhalas and of Buddhism and therefore is not to be divided, reminds us of Steven Kemper's research, which points to the presence of the past in contemporary Sinhala-Buddhist discourse. Here it is important to note that contemporary politicians who advocate devolution, aware of the power of readings of the *Mahavamsa* that promote the idea that the island of Sri Lanka is sacred to the Sinhala people, endeavor to demonstrate that devolution will not be deleterious for Buddhism. For instance, the Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, G. L. Peiris, "has assured the mahanayake theras [chief prelates] of the Malwatte and Asgiriya chapters [of the order of Buddhist monks] that the government did not propose to pass an amendment to the Constitution which would run counter to the already available Constitutional guarantee on the protection of the Buddha Sasana."[98] Doubtless aware of the *Mahavamsa* thinking that frames common perceptions about the role of the Sinhalas as defenders of the dharma, Minister Peiris assures his constituents that his government will continue to foster Buddhism.

In his study of Sinhala nationalism, Kemper draws attention to the prevalence of *Mahavamsa* stories among the Sinhalas:

> [T]he *Mahavamsa* occupies the same position in Sinhala society that the *Ramayana* holds in Indian society. People know the tradition before they know that they know it.[99] As children, they hear shreds and patches of

> the tradition recited,[100] they see temple paintings evoking it, or they follow cartoons in Sinhala newspapers representing the lives of righteous kings. As they grow older, they discover that there is a historical chronicle from which those episodes derive.[101]

As we shall see in the chapters that follow, since the late nineteenth century, Sinhala Buddhists, whether they refer to the *Mahavamsa's* narratives of war or of peace, have demonstrated amply that they are well aware of the shades of meaning of the post-canonical text. Moreover, inasmuch as the Dutugemunu–Elara conflict has been reproduced in Sinhala popular literature throughout history, including the fifteenth-century *Saddharmalankaraya* [The Ornament of the Good Law][102] and (in various versions) the eighteenth-century *Rajavaliya* [Lineage of Kings],[103] and in twentieth-century dramatic productions,[104] it is reasonable to assume that the past Buddhist narratives of kings and their wars have appealed to audiences from early times.

Along these lines, H. L. Seneviratne has persuasively argued that the *Mahavamsa's* story of the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, in which the "island of Sri Lanka and its inhabitants, as the guardians of Buddhism, are placed under divine protection,"[105] continues to resonate in the present; we have already noted expressions of it in 1957 (reactions to Prime Minister Bandaranaike) and in 1993 (the Tambiah Affair). The 1837 English translator of the (Pali) *Mahavamsa* bemoaned that the text was "seldom consulted by the priesthood [the *sangha*] and consequently rarely found in temples."[106] Notwithstanding his frustration, today it is very clear that its stories are well known by monk and laity alike.[107] Indeed, both detractors and protectors of Sinhala Buddhism allude to the power of the *Mahavamsa* in contemporary discourse, and they directly engage the so-called "*Mahavamsa* mentality" that suffuses thinking on war when they assess Sri Lanka's Sinhala–Tamil conflict.[108]

The *Mahavamsa's* author, allegedly the monk Mahanama, highlighted two episodes in his recounting of the island's "history". First, he narrated the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, along with the role of the island's kings in protecting it; second, he dilated upon the saga of King Dutugemunu. In fact, according to Seneviratne, these sagas are related:

> The ideology that Sri Lanka is the land where Buddhism is protected, that it is the trust and duty of the Buddhist Sinhala king to ensure that protection, … is given the most dramatic political expression in the kingship of Dutthagamani [Dutugemunu] …[109]

The Sinhala king protects the Sinhala people, who in turn protect the island, which itself is to shelter the dharma. Monarch, people and territory are fused in the saga of Dutugemunu, who goes to war to protect Buddhism. The *Mahavamsa's* Dutugemunu saga, which, as we shall see in Chapter 3, some modern Sri Lankan Buddhists argue contains a blueprint for the dharma's defense, is recounted in full

in Chapter 2 of this study. Here we will focus upon what the *Mahavamsa* has to say about the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, for it is in that story that Sinhala Buddhists find much of their justification for defending the dharma.

In his analysis of the *Mahavamsa* story regarding the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, R. A. L. H. Gunawardana has argued that there is dissonance between the Buddha of the *Mahavamsa* and the Buddha of the Pali canon, the latter of which provides the textual foundation of Sri Lankan Buddhism (and Theravada Buddhism generally).[110] In that study, Gunawardana maintains that the *Mahavamsa* story about the Buddha's alleged first visit to the island – in all, he made three – in which he rids Sri Lanka of forces inimical to Buddhism, provides the warrant for the use of violence for the sake of Buddhism.

According to Gunawardana's reading of the *Mahavamsa*, the Buddha's expulsion of the *yakkhas* – the non-human inhabitants of the island – contrasts with descriptions in the Pali canon of the Buddha taming similar creatures. In reinforcing the distinction, Gunawardana argues that, while the Buddha of the canon uses compassion to convince non-believers of his dharma, in the *Mahavamsa*, the Buddha uses force; in his "taming" of the *yakkhas*, the Buddha who, in the story, is referred to as the "Conqueror" (Jina), imposes "devious afflictions" upon the non-believers, driving them from their homeland. In fact, according to Gunawardana, "[i]n this tale the Buddha is clearly the conqueror who has time for compassion only after a kingdom [namely, the island of Sri Lanka] has been annexed."[111]

Building on Gunawardana's study, I would like to add that the *Mahavamsa's* story of the Buddha's first visit to the island, "For Lanka was known to the Conqueror where his doctrine should shine in glory" (*Mahavamsa* I.20), introduces, for the first time, King Dutugemunu, who is the subject of ten of the thirty-seven chapters of the *Mahavamsa*,[112] and to whom we have already referred. We meet Dutugemunu early in the first chapter, immediately after the Buddha, who has eventually placated the *yakkhas*, bequeaths to Sri Lanka a bodily relic for worship. Having acceded to the requests of a deity for a relic, the Buddha gives the deity a handful of his own hair, which he allows to be encased in a reliquary to be worshiped. In recounting this episode, the author of the *Mahavamsa* then adds that, eventually, after the death of the Buddha, a collar bone of the Conqueror is brought to Sri Lanka; it is placed in the same reliquary as the Buddha's gifted hair, and the reliquary itself is fortified. The third and final fortification of the reliquary is Dutugemunu's, "while he made war upon the *damilas*" (I.41) who (we learn in later chapters of the *Mahavamsa*), are the illegitimate rulers of the island. Inasmuch as relics (and their encasement) have the symbolic function of establishing Buddhism,[113] it is significant that the story of the acquisition of the island's first bodily relics of the Buddha are linked to the military campaigns of Dutugemunu. Dutugemunu's conquest of the *damilas* is homologized with the Buddha's conquest of the *yakkhas*, while the Buddha's bestowal upon the island of his bodily relics are completed by the warrior king Dutugemunu who, in fortifying the reliquary, symbolically provides for the further ensconcing of

Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Put differently, the *Mahavamsa's* first-chapter comparison of the two conquerors – the Buddha and King Dutugemunu, symbolized by the reliquary but obvious in their campaigns – enmeshes the two defenders of the dharma in one lesson about the limits of, and justification for, violence and war.

Though Gunawardana sees in the *Mahavamsa's* stories of the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and of Dutugemunu's campaigns the justification for permissible types of violence for the sake of the dharma, he does so without reference to Dutugemunu's initial introduction in the text. In other words, Gunawardana's starting point for analyzing the place of violence in the *Mahavamsa* is the Pali canon, rather than the internal structure of the *Mahavamsa's* first chapter. This, perhaps, leads Gunawardana to see "in the myth of the first visit of the Buddha an attempt at mediating a contradiction."[114] For Gunawardana, the saga of Dutugemunu, fully recounted in his war against *damilas* for the defense of Buddhism in later chapters of the *Mahavamsa* "is a clear instance of this new interpretation [of violence] to justify the actions of a king."[115] Yet, if we take the first chapter of the *Mahavamsa* as our starting point for analyzing the violence in that text, a different interpretation emerges: i.e. at least from the point of view of the fifth-century monk author(s) of the text, resort to violence is not a contradiction in need of mediation. Rather, along with compassion – and the other qualities of righteous rule – it can be a prerequisite when it comes to the dharma. Along these lines, it is significant that, in the *Mahavamsa* stories of the Buddha and of Dutugemunu, compassion is awakened in the two conquerors only following their victories. Moreover, as we shall see in Chapter 2 of this study, notwithstanding Gunawardana's views, Dutugemunu's resort to war may not be completely unconnected to canonical thinking on war. Finally, as Seneviratne has pointed out, we know about the campaigns of Dutugemunu, including his violent defense of the dharma, significantly only through the writings of monks; Asoka, another hero of the *Mahavamsa*, is known to us also through his inscriptions.[116]

Dutugemunu and other defenders of the dharma

We meet Dutugemunu in the *Mahavamsa's* first chapter, albeit ever so briefly. The next conqueror – whose career is explored in full in the *Mahavamsa* – is Asoka, the Indian monarch credited with uniting under his rule much of what is considered today as the Indian subcontinent. As is the case with Dutugemunu's initial introduction, Asoka is also aligned with the Buddha. According to the *Mahavamsa's* fifth chapter, Asoka "had slain his ninety-nine brothers … [and] won the undivided sovereignty over all Jambudipa [India]" (V.20). The author is quick to tell us when this happened: immediately following the statement about Asoka's prowess, we learn that "two hundred and eighteen years had passed from the nibbana [final enlightenment, that is, death] of the Master unto Asoka's consecration" (V.21). In this homology, Asoka is the conqueror of men; the Buddha is the conqueror of delusion, hatred, and greed – the impediments to enlightenment. Linking the Indian king's military campaigns and ascendancy to the throne, to the

final enlightenment of the Buddha, the *Mahavamsa* connects the conquering of people, which includes war, to the *summum bonum* of Buddhism.

We learn also that after his military campaigns, Asoka became the most generous supporter of the dharma up to his time (V.191). In the Asokan narrative, the Indian king's munificence toward Buddhist institutions and compassion are stirred after his conversion to the dharma, which comes (conveniently, some might argue) after his wars. Though Gunawardana does not compare the *Mahavamsa's* story of the Buddha's compassion after subduing the enemy with the compassionate state of the legendary King Asoka after annexing much of India in his expansionist campaigns, the parallels are striking. And even though there is no reference to killing in the episode of the Buddha's claims to Sri Lanka, the *Mahavamsa* alleges that the Buddha scared the *yakkhas* to death:

> [H]e [the Buddha] struck terror to their hearts by rain, storm, darkness and so forth … Then, when he had destroyed their terror and had spread his rug of skin … The Conqueror, sitting there, made the rug to spread wide, while burning flame surrounded it.
>
> (I.24–30)

"Daunted by the burning heat thereof and terrified" (I.30), the *yakkhas* were then shown the Buddha's compassion: they were spared by the Buddha in his conquest of the island. And just as the Buddha prepares the island for the introduction of Buddhism (by subduing its indigenous population filled with non-humans), Asoka sends his son and daughter to the island to introduce the monastic lineage there, amounting to its formal introduction, thus firmly planting Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Although the story of the Buddha's first visit to, and conquest of, Sri Lanka prepares the reader for both Asoka and Dutugemunu, there is a striking difference between the sagas of the two kings – namely, that (according to the *Mahavamsa*) Dutugemunu is already a Buddhist when he declares war, while Asoka is not. Dutugemunu, as we shall see in Chapter 2 of this study, defends the dharma, while Asoka, as we have noted, preserves the dharma – once he is converted to it – and he does so, significantly, through reliquary construction (V.175). And it is the story of the Buddha in Sri Lanka that mediates between the ideology of dharma preservation and defense, enacted in the sagas of Asoka and Dutugemunu, respectively. By the time the reader (or listener) arrives at chapter twenty-two of the *Mahavamsa*, which begins the saga of Dutugemunu proper, the ideology of preservation and defense of the dharma has already been well articulated; the reader is thus prepared for Dutugemunu's war against the *damilas*, itself replete with Buddhist symbolism and legitimation.

Yet, the *Mahavamsa* stories of the Buddha and the kings (which justify violence and even war) should not blind us to the fact – and it is a fact – that the *Mahavamsa* also presents a version of the Buddha who is opposed to violence and war. Indeed, the Buddha undertakes the second of his three visits to Sri Lanka to prevent a war:

> [The Buddha] saw that a great war, caused by a gem-set throne, was like to come to pass between the nagas Mahodara and Culodara, uncle and nephew, and their followers. … [A]nd, from compassion for the nagas, sought the Nagadipa.
>
> (I.45–47)

Here, the Buddha resolves to prohibit non-human beings, in this case, *nagas* – serpent deities – from engaging in war in an area generally believed to be in the north of Sri Lanka (where today, not incidentally, some Tamils are fighting for a separate state). Having miraculously arrived in Sri Lanka: "Hovering there in mid-air above the battlefield the Master, who drives away [spiritual] darkness, called forth dread darkness over the nagas" (I.58). The *nagas*, having then been comforted by the Buddha – and having listened to the "doctrine that begets concord" – are converted to the dharma (I.62). Like the *yakkhas* who had been tamed on the Buddha's first trip, the *nagas* – equally non-human – become civilized as a result of their conversion to the dharma. Yet, the *yakkhas* are tamed by fear, while the *nagas'* conversion is more complex: they are prepared by force for the peaceful message of the dharma.

The Buddha's second trip to the island, like the first, further claims Sri Lanka as a Buddhist territory. Annexing the area of the *nagas* while preventing a war, the Buddha resolves hostilities by delivering a discourse on the dharma. As we shall see in Chapter 4 of this study, Sri Lankan Buddhists who embody the narrative of Buddhist pacifism refer to the story of the Buddha's second journey to the island to legitimate their ethical stance of non-violence in regard to war.

By the same token, some of the Buddhists I interviewed referred to the Buddha's annexation of Sri Lanka, as well as to the campaigns of the monarchs – Dutugemunu and Asoka – in their justifications for war. Whether they claim for themselves the narratives of war or of peace, the Buddhists that I interviewed participate in an ethical world that allows for a variety of interpretations. Whereas some of the Buddhists whom we will meet in this study are "experts," that is, Buddhist monks and nuns, others are politicians, and many are non-monastic and hold no office. In other words, this study takes for granted that "[m]oral reflection and reason is the activity of the whole community," and not just the province of a "small group of 'experts'."[117]

Sri Lankan Buddhism and ethical theory

Only recently have scholars begun to take seriously the question of moral reflection in Theravada Buddhism, the type of Buddhism that Sri Lankans claim as their own. While earlier studies of Theravada Buddhism's ethical orientation saw it as importantly characterized by a tension between a variety of appeals reflecting ideal states of the "self," and certain other-regarding characteristics of the moral life,[118] today the focus has shifted toward the identification of the family of ethical theory to which Buddhism belongs. In this discussion, Charles Hallisey has taken

the lead. In a 1995 essay, having briefly reviewed the history of scholarship that describes the nature of Theravadin Buddhist ethics, Hallisey suggests that it is best "to begin any investigation of Buddhist ethics with a common-sense expectation that any historical tradition worth its salt will inevitably display evidence that its practitioners and intellectuals have resorted to more than one kind of moral theory."[119] Arguing that Theravada Buddhism has been as internally diverse as Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, Hallisey maintains that Theravadin Buddhist ethics is based on a plurality of general norms that are sensitive to context. For Hallisey, a worldview inflected by context sensitivity helps to explain the lack of systematic consistency reflected in Theravadin tradition. In Hallisey's presentation, a discussion of Buddhist ethics cannot proceed without recourse to Buddhist narratives, which are "discursive sites where Buddhists debated the scope and validity of the different ethical theories which [early Theravadin Buddhists] knew."[120] In other words, stories are the background in which appeals to general ethical norms are made. Like Hauerwas, Hallisey sees in moral stories both a reflection of the ethical quandaries that religious people debate, their resolution, as well as models of and for behavior. In other words, the moral life of Theravadin Buddhists in the stories of the Pali canon, of the commentarial literature, and of other narratives, allows for

> moral decisions to be acutely sensitive to the context in which they are made – so much so that [Theravadin Buddhists] begin not only to appreciate the possibility that some general truths are evident … in a particular case, allowing [Theravadin Buddhists] to recognize a prima facie duty as such, but also that we begin to feel comfortable with the possibility that precisely those features which might count in favor of a given action in one context may count against it in another.[121]

Hallisey thus proposes that Theravadin stories, windows into ethics, reveal that when Buddhists make moral decisions, they sometimes assume a kind of "ethical particularism," which may make them appear more inconsistent in their moral choices than even the pluralism of the tradition might otherwise suggest. Along these lines, Jeffrey Stout has pointed out that ethical thought often involves "moral bricolage," or "taking apart, putting together, reordering, weighting, weeding out, and filling in,"[122] that is, arranging and rearranging moral language to suit the situation. In short, both Stout and Hallisey aver that ethical quandaries are resolved in relation to particular contexts. For Hallisey, the sort of ethical particularism that his reading of Theravada Buddhism permits is tantamount to some notions of prima facie duties, a subject taken up (without reference to Buddhism) by W. D. Ross.[123] Hallisey proposes that "Ross's account of prima facie duties does not suggest that some moral principles are more important than others; it also eschews any attempt to discover any consistency in the things which we take to matter morally."[124] I find useful Ross's language of prima facie responsibilities, and Hallisey's expression of them, even though Ross fails to

capture the texture of moral theory that Hauerwas' nuanced discussion of narratives offers. Hallisey concludes that the diversity of stories about the Buddha and other notables "encourages us, in turn, to respond to the rich particularity of each situation before us without holding ourselves to a standard of moral consistency generally associated with taking guidance from a single ethical theory."[125]

Hallisey's point about prima facie duties and ethical particularism, as well as what we might expect to be critiques of it, were given concrete expression over a century ago in some 1891 articles and debates in a Sri Lankan Buddhist magazine aptly named *The Buddhist*. In the magazine, first published in 1889 and still in circulation today, Sri Lankan Buddhists have posed questions about Buddhism, recorded their frustrations about the condition of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and debated Buddhist philosophy. In some of the magazine's first issues, the subject of Buddhist ethics was prominent. For instance, in an 1891 letter to the editor, one O. A. A. Jayasekere queried "whether killing worms in a human body breaks the precepts?" – a reference to the first Buddhist precept regarding the avoidance of taking life (we shall return to the precepts in Chapter 2). The editor responded by employing ethical particularism, noting that the obligation not to take life can be contravened with good reason: "The merit of saving the life of a human being more than counter balances the demerit of killing a worm."[126] In other words, it is an obligation of the Buddhist not to take life, but that obligation is prima facie rather than absolute.

Another 1891 article, entitled "Can Lying be Justified?," spawned a debate about Buddhist ethics and obligations that spanned three issues of *The Buddhist*. In the first article in the series, the writer grappled with different types of duties regarding telling the truth, reflecting on the karmic consequences of lying:

> So, though lying may not be immediately detrimental in any way[,] it will almost always tend to an undesirable result remotely[,] and consequently cannot be justified. Better some direct temporary harm than any permanent undermining of society on which civilisation depends.

The article continues with an analysis of why one should never lie:

> If the world alone were inhabited by the Mahatmas alone – who are claimed to be all good and far-seeing – then a little slackening of the strictest rigidity may not be hurtful: but we must take the world as it is.[127]

With the author's reference to the Mahatmas, we are guided into a period of Sri Lankan Buddhist history in which theosophy framed many of the English-speaking Buddhist community's ethical debates. More importantly, however, we are privy to an instance in which a determination has been made that, at least when it comes to lying, we have an ultimate obligation always to tell the truth, given that we are not perfect beings with the foresight to know when a white lie might be appropriate. Yet, the editor of *The Buddhist*, A. E. Buultjens, disagreed;

noting that the article posed "a good casuistical question for debating societies," he preferred the notion that prima facie obligations inform Buddhist moral reasoning: "We think a *suppressio veri* [suppressed truth], when it does no harm to one's own self and does some good to another, is admissible – at least it is so in Buddhist Ecclesiastical Law, as we understand it."[128] Legitimating his point of view by basing it on what he feels to be a formalized Buddhist code, Buultjens advanced a Buddhism suffused with prima facie duties. In other words, telling the truth is best, but the protection of another person (perhaps through withholding the truth or perpetuating a mild dishonesty[129]) can outweigh the obligation not to lie.

Buultjens' Buddhist readership resisted the idea that the Buddhist ethical precepts are prima facie duties rather than ultimate obligations. In a letter to the editor in the next issue of *The Buddhist*, a scandalized writer scolded Buultjens:

> Sir – I am surprised to see you express it as your opinion that the suppression of truth can be justified under some circumstances. You base this strange doctrine on the Ecclesiastical Law. I know, I admit, very little of Ecclesiastical Laws; but I do know the eternal and absolute Law of Truth, inculcated by our Master [the Buddha], which leaves little chance for casuistry.[130]

In this critique of casuistry, the idea that the Buddhist ethical system imposes absolute obligations is made perfectly clear, despite what the editor of *The Buddhist* might think. Moreover, DBJ, the letter's author, continues with a warning:

> Casuistical discussions of such questions, "can lying be justified," and the like have a tendency to produce more harm than good, and therefore should be strongly deprecated.[131]

While Buultjens' ideas resonate with Hauerwas' notion that casuistry is an important feature of a community's moral reasoning, Buultjens' critic advances another view: Buddhism's ethical system demands ultimate obligations. Notwithstanding Buultjens' critic, the debate over whether Buddhist morality is framed by prima facie duties or ethical obligations, as we shall see in the pages that follow, continues to the present. For instance, a late twentieth-century expression of ethical duties mirrors, in many ways, Buultjens' late-nineteenth-century point of view: According to a Buddhist writing in 1986:

> Whether an individual can observe these five precepts to the very letter in all situations of life is a question that may be asked. The obvious answer to that question is that no one can, but that everyone can try. … *metta* [loving kindness] will establish friendliness … it is [the first precept] that saves humanity from destruction. By this precept alone, people would abjure wars. It is this precept that would pacify the savage instinct of

> killing either for the greed of food or for the greed of power or for the sake of so-called sport. No one has the right to take away the life of any other living being. It is selfish; it is immoral; it is sinful [but some conditions call for it].[132]

Along these lines, it is of interest to note that the Dalai Lama, the temporal and spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, commenting upon contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhists' justification of violence through a Buddhist idiom, and the more general question of the use of violence, has suggested that the precept of non-violence is difficult to maintain in all situations. In other words, he speculated, in the words of his interviewer, that an absolute duty of pacifism, as suggested by the situation in Sri Lanka, "doesn't work in the real world." According to the interview, the Dalai Lama was direct:

> [I]f the situation was such that there was only one learned lama or genuine practitioner alive, a person whose death would cause the whole of Tibet to lose all hope of keeping its Buddhist way of life, then it is conceivable that in order to protect that one person it might be justified for one or 10 enemies to be eliminated – if there was no other way. I could justify violence only in this extreme case, to save the last living knowledge of Buddhism itself.[133]

For the Dalai Lama, at least one extreme situation might call for violence, despite Buddhism's advocacy of pacifism. The Dalai Lama, moreover, framed his thoughts on war, and on a Buddhist's duty to pacifism, with metaphors of war; he apparently regards "tolerance" as "inner disarmament" and the "best armor."[134] As we shall see throughout this study, Sri Lankan Buddhists, too, imbue their thoughts on peace with metaphors of war, thus calling our attention to the well-embedded tension of war and peace in the Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka, in particular, and Buddhism, more generally. More importantly, the Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka offers compelling evidence that, depending on the context, Sinhala Buddhists emphasize one prima facie principle over another, which thus calls into question the commonly held assumption that all Buddhists are pacifists in all situations.

As this study on just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka suggests so far, viewing Theravadin Buddhist ethics through both pluralism and the lens of prima facie duties, rather than only assuming a single ethical principle (such as pacifism), permits complicated readings of primary actors in religious stories. In other words, if we posit a Buddhist ethical worldview of prima facie duties, we can make sense of the *Mahavamsa's* portrayal of the Buddha as sometimes compassionate and sometimes aggressive. We can also allow for the text's kings to be at once compassionate and violent, *given the specific situation*. In addition, as we shall see throughout this study, like the characters in the *Mahavamsa*, my informants made it clear to me that they pay attention to contexts as they make ethical

decisions, thereby suggesting that their views are shaped by sensitivity to particular situations.

We shall also see in the pages that follow how, in addition to ethical particularism, which in many regards is a “non-theory” (ethical) theory, Sinhala Buddhists have made arguments that resonate with the characteristic emphases of virtue-ethic theory, deontological theory, consequentialist theory – each of which will be elucidated in subsequent chapters – as they debate and enact moral stories about war. Indeed, in their adoption of one or another of these ethical orientations, and despite the characteristic emphasis of ethical particularism that we have been mapping in this chapter, some Sri Lankan Buddhists argue that they have an absolute duty of non-violence. Others, however, in word and in deed claim for themselves the responsibility to enact the principle of non-violence, and claim also that they have the duty to protect the dharma, which might call for war. How, simultaneously to take on both prima facie duties has remained a source of debate for many since at least the late nineteenth century (when archival sources permit a comprehensive view) to the present. In the end, and depending on the context and the individual whose ethical world is reflected in prima facie duties, one principle is over-ruled by the other. As we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study, the saga of Dutugemunu, as well as its interpretation in Sri Lanka, demonstrates that some Sri Lankan Buddhists maintain that the (Buddhist) prima facie duty of non-violence *can* be over-ridden if certain conditions prevail. In other words, the story of Dutugemunu, according to some of my informants, demonstrates that, while Buddhism urges pacifism, sometimes that pacifism can and should be over-ridden with good cause. Moreover, as we shall also see in Chapter 2, the King Dutugemunu story, which is a site for exploring prima facie responsibilities, must be viewed in light of the Buddha’s own biography, which subordinates kingship to the religious career.

In Chapter 3, we will explore the archival sources that provide the history of contemporary just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka. I am aware of the difficulties associated with using the official governmental archive as a primary source of knowledge, as Pandey has demonstrated, particularly because it is the view of the state;[135] yet, while many of the newspapers that I had access to were/are the official organ of the Sri Lankan state, many of them came into existence in part as a challenge to state-controlled media and thus present views that subvert the state. This archival material will be buttressed by the interviews that I conducted, along with my research assistants, Asha Abeyasekera and Yashodara Sarachchandara, in Sri Lanka in the summer of 1997 and the summer of 1998, respectively. Chapter 4 will feature arguments that my informants provided for Buddhist pacifism, as well as other ethical orientations to war. While, at first sight, it might seem inappropriate to discuss pacifists and those who advocate war in certain situations in the same chapter, we shall discover that there is a “shared starting point of proponents of nonviolence … and proponents of justified violence.”[136] Moreover, as we shall see, “just warriors,” as opposed to absolute pacifists who claim that war can never be justified, hold that war can sometimes

be justified. As will be made clear in Chapter 4, arguing from canonical and post-canonical stories, sometimes precisely from the same stories, various Sri Lankan Buddhists have claimed support for almost every conceivable position from absolute pacifism to holy war. In Chapter 5, we will revisit the idea of just-war ideology in Sinhala Buddhism and draw some conclusions. Particular attention will be paid to the treatment of Sri Lanka as a sacred relic by contemporary Buddhists and the implications of such a treatment for understanding just-war thinking in Sinhala Sri Lanka. For, as Robert Lingat has eloquently concluded, the Buddha's visits to Sri Lanka have transformed the island into a relic of the Buddha; and like each of his relics, they are ever to be protected:

> en raison des visites et des divers lieux que le Bouddha a sanctifies par sa presence, Ceylan est considére comme une relique *paribhojika* [a relic of use]; en consequence, "Lanka ne peut prosper sous le pouvoir d'aucun roi qui ne professerait pas la vraie foi". Le premier devoir du roi est non seulement de protéger la religion du Bouddha, mais de s'efforcer par tous les moyens d'éliminer toute puissance non bouddhiste qui tenterait de s'implanter dans l'île.[137]

Drawing upon Lingat's notions about the relationship between the Buddha and the island of Sri Lanka, I will isolate Sri Lankan Buddhism's own criteria for waging a just war, and show how they are different from, or consonant with, the just-war tradition of the West. In order to accomplish this, I will also examine the idea of "holy war" in contemporary Buddhist Sri Lanka in an effort to nuance the poles along the spectrum of thoughts on war there. But it is to the Buddhist texts and their interpretation, including the story of King Dutugemunu, who went to war in order to protect the Buddhist dharma, that this study now turns.

2

JUST-WAR THINKING IN TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

Introduction: dharma, devolution, and Dutugemunu

Since 1995, Sri Lankans have continued to debate the devolution package proposed by the People's Alliance (PA) government, which in effect would create regional autonomy for Tamils in the north of Sri Lanka.[1] At the same time, Sri Lanka's war between the predominantly Sinhala government and the separatist LTTE for the most part has continued unabated in the north of the island, considered by many Tamils to be their traditional homeland. In contemporary parlance, the protracted war in the north of Sri Lanka, with its cease-fires that issue only renewed fighting, is articulated as having three distinct phases, each bearing the eponymous name of the alleged homeland of the Tamils – namely, Eelam 1, Eelam 2, and Eelam 3. In the spring of 2000, more than five years after the third phase of the war began (April 19 1995), the PA government's public position on Sri Lanka's war continued to hinge on its promotion of a "peace package," which included both war and devolution, the latter of which would provide Tamils (who chose to live in the north) a type of semi-autonomy. While many Sinhala Sri Lankans support the government in its war against the LTTE, many Sinhalas oppose devolution, or the de facto Tamil "state" in the north of the island. Among those who oppose devolution are the venerable Mahanayakes (leading monks) of the Sri Lankan monastic fraternities; they are particularly resistant to international mediators, including the government of Norway (which has recently played a role), as facilitators in the Sri Lankan conflict, arguing that neither foreigners nor their own (predominantly Sinhala) government realize that devolution "would be detrimental to the Sinhala people."[2] Still others comment on "the tragic irony of it … that a leader elected on a mandate for peace [Chandrika Kumaratunga] is now presiding over one of the most fierce wars to occur in the country."[3]

In the debate over devolution, which has implications regarding the war, both sides (sometimes indirectly but often directly) refer to the stories of the Buddhist *Mahavamsa* to legitimate their arguments. For instance, in *War for Peace* [Sama Sangramaya], published by the PA government's Sudu Nelum (White Lotus) "peace" movement, we are informed that careful attention to the *Mahavamsa* reveals that Sri Lanka once consisted of "areas that were governed by different authorities," or, "the north, south, east, and west units, all which were themselves

under the power of one king."[4] Using the fifth-century *Mahavamsa's* version of history to promote their version of devolution, the PA government appeals to Sinhala speakers by linking the present to the past as it is depicted in one of Sri Lanka's ancient Buddhist narratives. Yet, Sinhalas opposed to devolution also draw upon the *Mahavamsa* to protest against granting semi-autonomy to Tamils residing in the north. For instance, the outspoken monk, Venerable Sobitha, reflecting a common reading of the *Mahavamsa*, has argued that "everyone [knows] that Sri Lanka was a Buddhist country and Buddhism has been the country's religion for 2,500 years."[5] While the Venerable Sobitha supports (the government's) war against the LTTE,[6] he is opposed to the devolution of power based on ethnic lines (that is, devolution that marks off the north as "Tamil"). In his line of thinking, if devolution of powers were granted in the north – thereby legitimating the territory as non-Sinhala and non-Buddhist – the integrity of the Buddhist island would be undermined. This, for Venerable Sobitha, would be unthinkable: from his point of view, which is based on the *Mahavamsa*, the Buddha himself claimed the entire island, including the north, as the Buddhist promised land. The 1997 remark of the Venerable Sobitha had been foreshadowed for over at least one hundred years; a Buddhist layman, writing in 1893, referred to Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, as the "sacred Island" as he described the island as the "centre" for Theravadin Buddhists.[7] In short, by reducing all of Sri Lanka's history to a fight for the land and its religious significance, adumbrated a century earlier in late-nineteenth-century ideas about Ceylon, Venerable Sobitha argues that devolution is the LTTE's first step in carving out a separate country in the sacred Buddhist island.[8] At the same time, the monk has declared that "Buddhists did not want anyone to be discriminated against and every one should enjoy equal rights."[9] Though it is impossible to gauge the venerable monk's sincerity, his rhetoric illuminates a question that each of Sri Lanka's post-colonial governments has asked: how does Sri Lanka balance the rights of the minorities with the claims of the Sinhala people?

Minority rights and majority claims also have been the impetus for the creation of Sinhala watchdog organizations, including the 1998 Sinhala Commission. The Commission's final report outlines alleged atrocities suffered by the Sinhala people during colonial rule and juxtaposes them to the "privileges" of the Tamils under the British. The Sinhala Commission report thus makes a case against devolution, arguing that Tamil claims to the north of the island are a consequence of colonial rule and, more importantly, that devolution "will only result in the break up of the country and unending war, and the destruction of the country known as Sri Lanka."[10]

The debate over devolution, especially opposition to the package, has prompted the PA government, elected in 1994, to respond to its detractors. Since 1995, the PA government has published pamphlets on the alleged necessity of the devolution package to maintain peace after war, or, perhaps more optimistically, to usher in a peaceful settlement in the context of war. In August 1995 a coalition of concerned citizens, reflecting the public attitudes of the PA government, issued a statement, one that the government since has promoted in its official "comprehensive

documentation on the devolution package and relevant issues" literature. In the statement of the coalition, resistance to the package is deemed a consequence of "two basic positions taken by sections of the Sinhala majority community." The document cites, on the one hand, Sinhala "mistrust of the Tamil people … that devolution will be used by the Tamil people to work towards a separate state of Eelam." It also refers to the resistance of the Sinhalas, who "do not see the need for devolving any power to the Tamils as they think that Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalese and that they would be ready to treat the Tamils and Muslims[11] fairly and justly if they accept the position and do not assert an intrinsic right to a place in the country."[12] These positions, endorsed and perpetuated by Venerable Sobitha, as his remarks suggest, are pervasive in contemporary Buddhist Sri Lanka. Chandra R. de Silva and I have referred to the fear of the Tamil "Other" – based on readings of the *Mahavamsa* and coupled with ideas about the integrity of Sri Lanka as the Buddhist promised land – as Buddhist fundamentalism.[13] Indeed, though the PA government does not use such denotation, it is nonetheless aware of the power of fundamentalist readings of the Buddhist *Mahavamsa* to shape attitudes regarding Tamils in Sri Lanka, as the Sudu Nelum document, with its evocation of the *Mahavamsa*, suggests.

The PA government has argued that the devolution package can be implemented only if there is peace, which, it claims, particularly because political solutions have failed, now must be achieved through war. This is why the government promotes war and peace at the same time. In its agenda of peace, explained in Sudu Nelum's *War for Peace*, the PA government engages canonical texts, including the *Dhammapada*, *Cullavagga* (of the *Vinaya*), the *Ambattha Sutta*, and the *Vasettha Sutta*, among others, to support the position that Buddhism is a non-violent religion that insists on racial harmony.[14] Yet, as the Sudu Nelum document laments, despite Buddhism's non-violent orientation, *dharmadwipa*, or the island of the dharma – Sri Lanka – "has become a land of death."[15] Thus, the PA government links canonical versions of pacific Buddhism to post-canonical pronouncements (of the *Mahavamsa*) regarding Sri Lanka's privileged status as the Buddhist promised land – *dharmadwipa*. In doing so, the government implicitly asserts that it is the government's duty to restore the island to its former, mythic glory. Since 1995, when the peace process seems to have irrevocably broken down, the PA government has justified war as a remedy for the redemption of *dharmadwipa*. Thus, given the government's manipulation of Buddhist imagery – canonical and post-canonical – the debate over devolution raises serious questions regarding Buddhism and war.

At the same time that we note the Buddhist rhetoric that suffuses the PA government's ideology about war, we must take note of the classical Western formulation of the war for peace that the PA government promotes: like St Augustine, who, in the fourth century, wrote that "peace is not sought in order to kindle war, but war is waged in order that peace may be obtained,"[16] the present Sri Lankan government arms itself for peace. The PA government's war for peace, then, reflects both Buddhist and Western concerns (the latter doubtless as a result

of its colonial legacy). Indeed, the PA government accommodates a *Mahavamsa* view and international thinking on war, the latter of which, as we noted in Chapter 1, is inextricably linked to Christianity. Since the PA government's election in 1994, notwithstanding the manipulation of Buddhist stories, essays have appeared in the local newspapers on the nature of war, essays that directly link Sri Lanka's war to the discourse of international just-war thought, essays that tacitly call into question the motives of the previous government.[17]

The PA government's manipulation of the imagery of ancient Buddhist stories is striking. Arguing that, in the days recorded in the *Mahavamsa*, the king ruled over different political units in a system of devolution, the PA government in its package has aligned its responsibilities with those of (Buddhist) kings, the last of which ceded power to the British in 1815. In its use of the imagery of Buddhist kings and ancient political systems, the government hearkens back to the days of the *Mahavamsa*, asking: "Is it not justifiable to follow the footsteps of our forefathers?"[18] In the very asking of the question, the government underscores the important point that the government is a competent authority to wage war, as were former kings, whose glory is recorded in the texts. The authority to make war which, in the Sri Lankan case, is homologized with the king's authority, is an important criterion in the Western formulation of just-war thought. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, writing in the thirteenth century and reflecting on St Augustine's ideology on war, maintained that "in order for a war to be just, three things are necessary. First the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged."[19] The PA government, asserting its authority to declare war, finds justification in ancient Buddhist narratives, while at the same time, whether wittingly or not, conforming to what are now international standards based on Christian morality.

The PA government's orientation to the *Mahavamsa* is best elucidated by a study of the concepts related to the "mundane" (*lokiya*) and the 'super-mundane"(*lokuttara*), both of which are deeply imbedded in Pali Buddhist thought, as well as in post-canonical literature, such as the *vamsas* ("histories"). As Josine van der Horst has maintained, the *Mahavamsa* has its relevance in the profane, temporal, or mundane reality of the Sinhala-Buddhist people. Indeed, it is important to note that the PA government's reading (and use) of the *Mahavamsa* and its exploits of kings is this-worldly. In other words, the text's "this-worldly" orientation authorizes the PA government's political decision making. And inasmuch as the text claims that its intention is to inspire the 'serene joy and emotion of the pious," the epigraph recorded at the conclusion of thirty-six of the thirty-seven chapters of the text,[20] the *Mahavamsa* also has an obvious *lokuttara*, or "other-worldly" orientation. In short, in recounting the bloodshed incurred at the hands of devout Buddhist kings who defend Buddhism in war, the text aims, among other things, to inspire religious emotion.[21] The dual orientation of the text is reflected in the PA government's interpretation of it: the government assigns a spiritual meaning to the temporal campaigns of legendary kings and to its own historic role in defending the sacred island. Not unlike the fifth-century St Augustine, who wrote

to the governor of Africa during a turbulent period, "Do not imagine that no one can please God while he is engaged in military service,"[22] the PA government asks its warriors to consider their campaigns against terrorism as religious work. Moreover, inasmuch as the PA's reading of the text's political reality has religious overtones, it can be argued that the distinction between the "this-worldly" and the "other-worldly," at least in Sri Lankan political rhetoric, is not clear.

The PA is not the first post-independence government to capitalize on both dimensions of the *Mahavamsa*, or to allude to this and other texts and their stories of religious Buddhist kings, in its attempt to define itself and its agenda for resolving the protracted Sinhala–Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka. For instance, soon after he became prime minister in 1977, heading the United National Party (UNP), J. R. Jayewardene declared that his government would be based on *dharmista* principles. In other words, he maintained that his government would be based on the alleged principles that Buddhist kings, particularly Asoka, used to govern in ancient days. Moreover, he buttressed his political promises with allusions to the Pali canon: Indeed, Jayewardene declared that he "would establish a just, free society based on the teachings of the Buddha without discriminating against any other religion," and that he "would establish a righteous government based on the teachings of the Buddha."[23] In 1990, following in the pattern of tying religion to politics, Sri Lanka's (UNP) prime minister, D. B. Wijetunga, drew on Buddhist stories to encourage Sri Lanka's citizens to fly the national flag. According to Wijetunga, "Our country has been blessed with the benign influence of the teachings of Lord Buddha." Wijetunga added that "Lord Buddha mentions in the *Dhajagga Sutta* [of the Pali canon] that Sakra, the king of the Gods, advised his army to obtain courage by gazing at his flag."[24] Here, Wijetunga drew an analogy between patriotism and religious piety to aver that the Buddha condoned militias and endorsed the sentiments that are inspired by political symbols. Thus, as Wijetunga's manipulation of religious texts makes plain, Sri Lanka's elected governments – both UNP and PA – in supplying their Sinhala-Buddhist constituents with what they expect to hear from their politicians and leaders, have couched their political rhetoric in the Buddhism of the texts.

The PA government's reflections on Buddhist texts has created a posture that allows the head of state to claim that "it is evident in the biographies of Dutugemunu and Asoka [which we considered in Chapter 1] that most warrior kings ultimately regretted their involvement in war," emphasizing the PA government's own regret regarding the use of force against Tamil separatists. Although the PA government urges that "we should look for a more humanitarian solution to the current problem instead of war,"[25] it nevertheless concedes that negotiations have failed, and so, with public assertions of remorse, argues that its only real option is war. Bearing the burden of moral authority, the PA government suffuses its rhetoric on war with traditional (Christian) just-war ideas, particularly regret and the notion that war should only be waged as a last resort. In this chapter, we shall study both of these criteria in the context of traditional Buddhist thinking, as well. As we shall see, these criteria are inextricably bound to other elements of what now might be

termed "cross-cultural just-war thought," though it is their relationship to the Buddhist heritage of Sri Lanka that will concern us here.

Sri Lanka's current president, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, elected in 1994, has publicly maintained, based on her interpretation of Buddhist canonical texts, that it is her duty – as it was of past rulers – to protect her citizens, no matter their ethnicity. During a period of political negotiations with the LTTE that coincided with her 1995 Vesak message,[26] Kumaratunga alluded to Buddhist texts as she justified her government's actions:

> The ethnic conflict that has been going on in our country for the last 11 years … has its origin from unwholesome relationships … If the principles of Buddhism are respected, it becomes the bounden duty of all rulers to mete out justice and fairplay to all people and bring about their welfare to the fullest possible degree.[27]

In short, Kumaratunga publicly asserted her right to wage war against the LTTE for the greater good of the citizens of her country. Kumaratunga's allusions to the great Buddhist kings of the past – including Asoka – are reminiscent of one of her predecessors (from a different political party): Ranasinghe Premadasa. In her propaganda regarding the war, and as van der Horst has noted of (the UNP) President Premadasa, whose party was defeated by Kumaratunga's People's Alliance in 1994:

> This particular line of argument of the ruler being just yet severe, of advocating non-violence yet retaining his [in the case of Kumaratunga, her] traditional right to punish (*danda*) – even kill – when considered necessary, i.e., as an act of ordering violence, is in fact the traditional line of argument as established in the concept of the Asokan *Cakkavatti*-King.[28]

In other words, Kumaratunga, like the modern heads of state who preceded her, claimed for herself the role of the wheel-turning monarch, the *cakkavatti*, the just king of the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* (CSS), thereby embodying, or enacting, an important Buddhist story. Kumaratunga's political rhetoric indeed attests to the power of Buddhist narratives to shape contemporary political Sri Lankan discourse regarding the war.

Within a few months of her Vesak declaration, while praising National Auxiliary Force volunteers "for coming forward in a spirit of sacrifice," Kumaratunga proclaimed that she would "attain the highest victory with the least destruction."[29] In her (public) statements, holding that war is deplorable and in need of limits, Kumaratunga, though urging the Buddhist teaching of non-violence, with (public displays of) regret has justified war as the only remaining option. Moreover, casting her war against the LTTE in the rhetoric of "last resort," Kumaratunga has contextualized her position on war within the failure of the 1995 peace negotiations:

> Our peaceful efforts were rejected by them [i.e. the LTTE] and we were again forced on to a war situation. Today we have reached the second stage of the peace process. As a solution can not be reached through negotiations, we have taken steps to end it militarily.[30]

For Kumaratunga, who couches her ideas of war in the rhetoric of war as a last resort, the second stage of the peace process is war, a war for peace. In short, Kumaratunga avers that she has been left with no other choice but to go to war – and to go reluctantly.

Kumaratunga's conception of war as a "last resort" is shared by her Deputy Minister of Defense, General Anuruddha Ratwatte. In 1995, he declared that the government's goal was "to bring peace with dignity." He added that "if we fail to bring peace through discussion we will bring peace through war." Moreover, Ratwatte claimed in 1995 that "if everything fails we will go to war,"[31] or engage in war only as a last resort. Roughly two weeks after that declaration, specifically on 19 April 1995, the LTTE interrupted a cease-fire, and commenced Eelam 3 against the predominantly Sinhala (and Buddhist) government.[32]

In the summer of 1998, General Ratwatte, the architect of the government's present strategies for eliminating the LTTE, on various occasions was homologized with Dutugemunu,[33] the heroic warrior king of the *Mahavamsa*, whom we met in Chapter 1 and whose story we shall study below. The comparison was first made on General Ratwatte's birthday by the Buddhist monk, the Venerable Sobitha Thera who, as we have seen, is a proponent of "finishing the war."[34] Now labeled by some as the modern-day Dutugemunu, Ratwatte – who, like the Buddhist warrior, Dutugemunu, has waged a war against "the Tamil" – has become the embodiment of contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhist ideology about war. However, it must be pointed out here that, despite Kumaratunga's commitment to fight the terrorism of the LTTE through conventional war, she is not an advocate of the alignment between Ratwatte and the Venerable Sobitha.[35] Yet, as the Venerable Sobitha's remarks indicate, the monk's attitude toward General Ratwatte is an instance of the power of stories to shape ethical views, particularly about war, thus reminding us of Hauerwas' notion of the relationship between narratives and ethics.

Buddhist meanings, monks, and metaphors: ideas of "just war"

As the PA government's rhetoric and Venerable Sobitha's characterization of Ratwatte suggest, in the Pali canonical and post-canonical works, metaphors of kings abound, metaphors that have been assigned a wide range of meanings by scholars in Buddhist studies. For instance, Gananath Obeyesekere, in his study of the post-canonical *Mahavamsa*, argues that the story of King Dutugemunu's conscience upon slaying (the *damila*) King Elara is a metaphor for the psychological state that attaches to parricide. Obeyesekere's reasoning proceeds

like this: though Dutugemunu slays hundreds of his own kinsmen to secure power, he shows little remorse. Yet, after he kills the *damila* Elara, he suffers such enormous remorse that he cannot celebrate his victory. For Obeyesekere, Dutugemunu's reactions to the two experiences of war can be "elucidated from a symbolic and psychoanalytical study of his life."[36] Relating Dutugemunu's victory over Elara to parricide, Obeyesekere interprets the victorious king's fit of conscience through the lens of the Oedipus complex. For other contemporary Sri Lankans, however, the metaphor of the anguished king points not to psychological conflict, but rather to war with justification (Sinhala: *yukti sahagata yuddhaya*). Though some Sri Lankan Buddhist interpreters of Buddhism, including the Venerable Walpola Rahula, have claimed that "violence in any form, under any pretext whatsoever, is absolutely against the teaching of the Buddha,"[37] and thus of Buddhism, some Buddhists that I interviewed in Sri Lanka during the summers of 1997 and 1998 suggested that war can be justified if certain criteria are met. In this chapter, I shall highlight the "just-war thinking" that a section of Sinhala-Buddhist Sri Lanka argues shaped Dutugemunu's conscience, and examine what foundation there is, if any, for such thinking in Theravada Buddhism, in general.

As is well known, the study of European (Christian) just-war tradition has isolated a set of concerns dubbed just-war criteria. While these criteria are a product of scholarship on Christianity, they are not uniquely Christian, as John Kelsay has made clear.[38] Indeed, these criteria provide a useful set of concepts for analyzing religious traditions that must balance claims of non-violence with the realities of war. For Kelsay, all religious traditions taking seriously the presumption that inflicting harm against others is morally problematic will contain just-war thinking of some sort.[39] In short, religious thinking, be it Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu,[40] or Buddhist, that takes seriously the relationship of ethics and power, contains just-war thought.[41] However, not all scholars are in agreement on whether just-war traditions, particularly Christian just-war theory, contain an embedded presumption against violence: James Childress argues that Christian just-war theory recognizes a moral presumption against war, whereas other scholars, amongst them James Turner Johnson, argue that it does not.[42]

Yet, as the Buddhists I interviewed in the course of my study argued – whether they justified war or not – Buddhism is a religion that teaches peace and is prejudiced against violence and war. Whereas the Buddhist pacifist maintains that the teaching of peace can never be over-ruled for any reason, the subject of Chapter 4 of this study, the just-war thinker argues that there may be occasions when one must (regretfully) have recourse to lethal violence. In other words, the just-war thinker would argue that, though the duty of peace is ineradicable, it can nonetheless be suspended for a time.[43] Indeed, some of my interviewees made the case for prima facie, rather than absolute, obligations. And the precedent to argue for prima facie duties, at least according to some of the Buddhists I interviewed, was set by the Buddha himself. I had previously recognized that some canonical passages were susceptible of a "just-war" construction, a perception that was confirmed when, during my field investigations, I discovered that Buddhist monks

and laity did in fact put that construction on some of these texts. For instance, in one of my interviews, conducted in 1998, the Venerable Athuraliya Rathana, who is the coordinating secretary of the National Sangha Council (Jathika Sangha Sabhava), alleged that there are many stories in the canon that depict the Buddha as an advocate of force and of violence if there is just cause. Some of these stories are about the Buddha, others are told by him. The Venerable Rathana cited, among others, the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* (CSS), which (as we noted in Chapter 1) depicts a king, committed to the dharma, who is nonetheless flanked by a fourfold army. For the monk, these images suggest that even the Buddha, who taught that the paradigmatic Buddhist king is a pacifist, realized that war is a reality of life and that, for defensive measures, war can be justified.[44] For the monk, it does not logically follow that the Buddhist teaching of non-violence must always – in every case – lead to a conclusion of pacifism; real life does not allow for such an interpretation.[45] The monk thereby distinguished between the ideal situation of the text and the situation "on the ground." Moreover, for the monk, the CSS provides the contemporary Sri Lankan government with the Buddhist justification it needs to proceed with the war against the LTTE.

In my discussion with a Buddhist layman, the outspoken and controversial Nalin de Silva,[46] he too referred to the CSS as he qualified his remarks about Buddhism and war. De Silva suggested that the reason that the paradigmatic king of the CSS could be righteous and teach pacifism in the first place had to do with his having an army: "only after non-Buddhists saw his army could he pacify them and bring them to Buddhism." Thus, for de Silva, the army in the *sutta* is a vehicle for forcing people – through subtle manipulation – to convert to the dharma. Moreover, in de Silva's line of thinking, the presence of the army indicates that even a righteous Buddhist king might have to fight a defensive war to protect Buddhism.[47]

Notwithstanding the Venerable Rathana's remarks and de Silva's opinions, it is important to note at the outset of our more fulsome discussion of the CSS that neither it, nor the Pali canon more generally, contains direct discussions on whether or not war is justified. Thus, the canonical Buddhist texts do not list the criteria that must be met if one is to wage a just war. In other words, there is no just-war "tradition," per se, in the canon. Rather, implicit in the reasoning of some of my Sri Lankan informants – both lay and monastic – is the notion that there are seeds for just-war "thinking" in the canon that, I will argue below, perhaps become mature in the post-canonical *Mahavamsa*. These seeds are most striking in the CSS, the canonical text that, as we have seen, juxtaposes violent kings and righteous kings, and includes, as well, military metaphors.

Although it is not possible to know for sure the intention of the CSS, it is likely that it offers a Buddhist view of the South Asian religious value of non-violence (*ahimsa*). If we take seriously the Venerable Rathana's and de Silva's views of the CSS, rather than dismiss them because they do not accord with pacifist readings of the text, it is reasonable to argue that while the CSS is a discourse on non-violence, and urges non-violence – *ahimsa* – it problematizes the issue of violence

and war. Moreover, while it is possible that the CSS saga of the pacific, yet warrior, king, flanked by an army, is perhaps intended as an allegory for peaceful conquest over any stumbling block, the question remains: why did the authors of the text choose to round out the metaphor of the non-violent king with an army? And given that none of my informants who referred to the CSS to justify their positions argued for an allegorical interpretation, in the present the text seems to direct part of our attention to the issue of violence by choosing to include an army, despite the king's commitment to *ahimsa*. In the view of many of my informants, while it is true that the basic thrust of the Buddha's recorded teaching is clearly toward non-violence, it does not necessarily follow that he taught, and that we should assume, a negative approach to the question of Buddhists serving in an army, or Buddhist kings maintaining a militia. In fact, it seems logical to conclude that the Buddha's teaching on non-violence was not interpreted or put into practice in a univocally pacifist or anti-military-service way by early Buddhists, just as some of the canonical texts, including the CSS, might suggest.

Balkrishna Gokhale pointed out long ago, in his exploration of Buddhist kingship, that there are military metaphors in some of the textual discourses of the Pali canon.[48] This is particularly striking given that the primary sources of Christian just-war ideology – the Gospels – are bereft of military metaphors. Indeed, Jesus' "preaching is an example of vivid teaching employing seemingly endless metaphors and parables, yet none are drawn from military life."[49] In contrast, the Theravada Buddhist canonical texts are replete with military metaphors. As examples, let me record two random passages from the canon recorded of the Buddha, passages that Buddhists alerted me to during the course of my field study. Both Buddhist just-war thinkers, as well as those who argue that Buddhism imposes an ultimate obligation to be non-violent, called my attention to the *Dhammapada*, verse 128, which compares a true Buddhist to a vanquisher on the battlefield: "One may conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, yet he is the best of conquerors who conquers himself."[50] Another metaphor, or rather, in this case, simile, that was often expressed during my field study, likens a monk's resolve to renounce the home life to a warrior's weapon that is enclosed (and presumably does not "fall").[51] This simile was elicited during conversations with monks who were asked whether the Buddhist texts were produced in a context that assumed that warfare was a part of life.

Notwithstanding the use of military metaphors and similes in the texts, the discourses, of course, are not straightforward depictions of Buddhist views on war and violence. Though Lambert Schmithausen has argued recently that a narrative of the *Samyutta Nikaya* categorically condemns war,[52] an argument that we shall explore in Chapter 4, none of my informants cited the narrative as their proof text for absolute pacifism or even war with limits. Notwithstanding Schmithausen's conclusions, it is safe to say that, while there are no straightforward depictions of war in the canon, ideas on war and violence are woven into the fabric of some of the texts, especially as they relate to kingship. For instance, in textual Theravada Buddhism, a Buddhist king in theory should be in possession

of two commonly mentioned "tangibles and intangibles," of which "one is a full treasury (*paripunnakotthagara*),[53] [and the other] is a large, strong and well-equipped army."[54] That army, furthermore, "is generally described as four-fold (*caturangini*) consisting of the elephant corps, cavalry, the chariot corps and infantry."[55] Thus, as the descriptions of the army suggest, the pervasive issue of warfare in ancient Buddhist India is acknowledged in the canonical texts.

Despite the inclusion of a strong army in the CSS, the king, if righteous and just, was to be guided by a power stronger and loftier than that which flows from military might and weapons. That power is the dharma, the foundation of Buddhist ethical life. As the exemplar of justice and morality, one requirement of the king was that he was to rule his subjects justly, while he himself was guided by the highest morality, the dharma. In this way, according to the canon, the Buddhist king was to be a beacon to all; as Stanley Tambiah reminds us, "the dharma of cosmic law and its transcendence (nibbana) are larger in scope and superior to the dharma of righteousness as practised by the ruler."[56]

In Theravada Buddhism the source of the dharma is not a god; rather, the dharma is reflected in righteous human behavior. Thus, early Buddhist ideas about warfare and statecraft also reflect ideas about the dharma and the ethical life. Moreover, not only does canonical Theravada Buddhism recognize a relationship between power and ethics, it discusses its ramifications as well. This is most striking in the canon's discourse, the *Agganna Sutta* (AS), which provides an etiology of kingship and thus defines the qualities of the righteous monarch. Indeed, the AS relates that kingship evolved as a result of unethical behavior, or greedy disposition, stealing and lying.[57] In short, without immorality there would have been no need for kingship, an idea that also pervades the writings of St Augustine.[58] From the very beginnings of recorded Theravadin Buddhist thought on monarchs, then, kingship has been inextricably linked to Buddhist ethics.

According to the AS, it was as a result of unethical behavior that "beings" gathered and elected one among them who

> should be wrathful when indignation is right, who should censure that which should rightly be censured and should banish him who deserves to be banished … He charms others by the dharma.[59]

Here, as in the passages that Gokhale cites in his study of kingship, the implication is that while the editors of the canon promoted the Buddha as one who promoted pacifism based on compassion, love, and sympathy, one reading of the canon is that he also accepted the possibility of a just cause for violence, whether it be to protect the kingdom or to punish its citizens. As we have seen, President Kumaratunga's 1995 remarks attest to a modern interpretation of Buddhist virtues, as well as the conflict presented by political power and authority, which might call for violence. Yet it must not be forgotten that in the texts, and in contemporary political rhetoric, the dharma governs those who govern.[60] Hence the distinctive

focus of the canonical texts: because the ultimate arbiter of power is the human, the texts provide discussion on ways to subdue power so that it will not corrupt.

In the CSS, the text that most fully explores the relationship between morality, kings, violence and power, the virtues of a just king (*cakkavatti*) are extolled and related to the dharma. The discourse focuses on a righteous monarch who "formerly … lived victorious over the earth, having conquered it, not by a weapon (*adandena*), not by arms (*asatthena*), but by the dharma."[61] In other words, he did not come to rule through violence but through the Buddhist teachings. The implication, further, is that he continued to rule because of the immorality of beings.[62]

The king who ruled after him, "the anointed (*muddhavasitto*) warrior,"[63] as he is called in the text, goes to the first righteous monarch to ask him how to rule. The monarch tells him to rule by the dharma:

> Now, you, sir (*tata*), leaning on the dharma, honoring, respecting and worshiping it, paying homage to it, honoring it, being [yourself] a dharma-banner, a dharma-signal, having the dharma as master, should provide the right watch, ward, and protection for your own people, for the army (*bala-kaya*), for the noblemen, for the vassals, for brahmins … [64]

Through the king's example, the dharma guides all: the king's citizens as well as his army. Moreover, the dharma, as it guides the *cakkavatti*, replaces the weapon as vanquisher, so much so that rival kings approach to learn of the source of the monarch's power, represented by the "celestial wheel," rather than by a weapon. According to Tambiah, the "symbol of dharma in political life for the Buddhists was the wheel (*cakka*), which replaces the scepter or rod (*danda*), the symbol for authority in [Hindu] doctrine."[65]

As the enemies approach the wheel-turning monarch, we view him through the eyes of his enemies. Here, it is striking that though the *cakkavatti's* justice is symbolized by the wheel – that is, the symbol of dharma – the king nonetheless is accompanied by an army:

> Then, monks, the celestial wheel rolled onwards towards the eastern direction, and after it went the wheel-turning king, and with him his fourfold army (*caturanginiya senaya*) [of elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry …][66]

Flanked by his army, the "warrior" king spreads the dharma, advising his enemies to shun violence and, among other things, specifically exhorting them: "slay no living thing. Do not take that which has not been given."[67] Whether the editors of the canon wanted us to consider that the warrior king establishes the dharma through pressure exerted by an army, as Nalin de Silva claims, or whether

he establishes it through pacific means, as the Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera suggested to me,[68] remains an open question.

Both de Silva and the Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera, though vocal critics of the PA government, support the government's attempts to thwart Tamil separatists through war, and offer that the CSS contains the blueprint for fighting a just war. Yet, de Silva holds that literal readings of the CSS obscure its meaning, while the monk, whose monastery's sitting room is decorated with photographs of General Denzel Kobbekaduwa, a slain Sinhala hero, argues that the king was an actual person. In his reading of the imagery of the text, de Silva insists that we should keep in mind that the hero of the CSS is a king and not a buddha, or even a monk. Thus, there is nothing incongruous about the king's resorting to violence, or engaging in defensive war, if necessary, an idea proposed by the Venerable Piyadassi, one of Sri Lanka's greatest Buddhist missionaries of the modern period, who passed away in 1998.

In my 1997 interview with the Venerable Piyadassi, I questioned him about the imagery of the CSS, particularly the military metaphors: "What do you make of the army in the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta*?," I asked. His reply is worth repeating in full:

> Here the king might have to use the army and use force. Well the Buddha never interfered in these matters [of the state] and surely he would have known that even righteous kings would have to defend themselves if attacked. You have to defend yourself. These are difficult questions. If someone goes to kill my mother, I'm going to stop him. So this could be a condition in which I am forced to kill. But still killing is killing and saving is saving. Killing cannot be justified in Buddhism, but a king defending the country and Buddhism can [be justified]; the Buddha never got involved in these matters.[69]

Though it is difficult to untangle the many strands of the Venerable Piyadassi's thought on the CSS, and more generally on war and Buddhism, my own interpretation of them is that the monk was pragmatic: he argued that Buddhism allows for defensive war but that, in the final analysis, there must be good reason for it such as a ruler's protection of citizens. "Saving," from the point of view of the Venerable Piyadassi, is a responsibility of both the ordinary individual and the ruler, even though it may entail defensive killing. As the Venerable Piyadassi seemed to suggest, there are times when the obligation to save, which may involve killing, may outweigh the obligation of non-violence. According to the monk, the CSS is a reminder of that possibility.

In the Venerable Piyadassi's and Nalin de Silva's two-tiered morality (that is, the notion that morality is linked to status), and as we shall see below, kings are inferior to monks and buddhas in Theravadin Buddhist tradition, and thus their resort to violence is not incompatible with their status. At the same time, de Silva was quick to point out to me that even the Buddha, particularly in his previous

lives, was no stranger to violence and war. In particular, de Silva cited the *Maha-Ummagga Jataka*,[70] in which the Buddha, in a previous life, advises the king on how to win a war; and the *Bakka Jataka*,[71] in which the Buddha in yet another incarnation, this time, as a tree god, exclaims "sadhu sadhu saaa!" ("jolly good, jolly good, wow!") upon the violent death of a crane killed by a crab. For de Silva, the *Jataka* tales prove that Buddhism is no stranger to violence and war. Moreover, de Silva qualified his assertion by adding that it is only as a buddha, and as King Vessantara (the Buddha's penultimate birth), that there is no record of the Buddha's use of weapons or violence. In his (perhaps overstated) reading of the Jataka tales, de Silva concludes that, in the tales, defensive wars are depicted, whereas the real life concerns of the monarch – the *cakkavatti* – called on him to establish his hegemony by waging offensive wars. Which is why, de Silva remarked, "the *cakkavatti* [of the CSS] preached the dharma only after conquering." Referring to the legend of King Asoka, de Silva tacitly implied that, given a king's role and its association with brute force, a *cakkavatti* is inferior to a buddha. All of which, according to de Silva, is further evidence that the *cakkavatti* of the CSS was not meant to be a symbol of pacifism; for de Silva, the Buddhist tradition dictates against such an interpretation.

It is possible that the CSS, with its wheel-turning monarch, like the *Agganna Sutta*, as Steven Collins suggests, is an ironic commentary on kingship, that is, a critique of Hindu monarchical ideas, in which resort to violence is an intrinsic feature.[72] Indeed, the monks associated with the small movement, Bhikkhus for Peace and Justice, which publishes *Yuga Mehevara*, a newsletter that critiques the government, suggested as much in my interviews with them.[73] For them, the army remains part of the kingly metaphor, symbolic of the king's might – despite the Buddhist king's commitment to non-violence – to show that he can rule without force, that he is superior. Contrary to Hindu ideas, the monks argued that a truly righteous king, if truly righteous, would not need an army in the first place. Thus, the army can only be symbolic, never to be used. More importantly, the monks claimed that, notwithstanding the CSS, there never has been such a king, particularly because the demands of a king, including protection of the nation, call on him to exert force, perhaps even to engage in war. Even Asoka, they claimed (as they reflected upon the *Mahavamsa* story of him), only became a righteous king after engaging in war (as we saw in Chapter 1 of this study). Thus, in an interesting twist, the monks argued that, though the CSS is a commentary on the differences between Hindu and Buddhist ideals of kingship, the text's ideal types force us to confront the realities of rule, which must allow for defensive war. For the *Yuga Mehevara* monks, and for the Venerable Rathana of the National Sangha Council, whom we met earlier, then, despite very conflicting views on the nature and meaning of the CSS, the text establishes the seeds for just-war thinking in Theravada Buddhism. In the Venerable Rathana's line of thinking, the text problematizes the issue of violence simply by including an army along with a "warrior" king. For the *Yuga Mehevara* monks, the text, because of its "ideal" characterization of the king, and thus its absence of war, advances the "real"

possibility of violence. For both, then, regardless of their varying interpretations, the possible use of violence by a king is a real issue in the text.

There was also agreement on another issue of the CSS, notwithstanding the differences that led to the consensus. For the Venerable Rathana and for the *Yuga Mehevara* monks, the text contains a discussion of ethical obligations regarding war. If my impression of the monks' views are correct, they all argued that the text helps to lay a foundation for a discussion of what some scholars of just-war thinking refer to as "prima facie obligations," a topic broached in the introduction to this book and to this chapter. In other words, though the text may not be a straightforward depiction of Buddhist views on violence and war, for the Venerable Rathana and the *Yuga Mehevara* monks, the CSS (as do some other canonical texts) directs our attention to the debate in Theravada Buddhism over whether pacifism is an absolute duty or a prima facie responsibility.

Theravada Buddhism, non-violence, and prima facie obligations: some textual evidence

In his work on morality and conflict, James Childress, exploring Christian just-war tradition, points out that when distinctions between non-violence and violence are morally significant, and when "non-violence has priority over violence,"[74] if conflict arises, there must be justification for the transition from non-violence to violence, and there must be remorse.[75] Theravada Buddhism is no stranger to the idea that non-violence has priority over violence, especially since, as we have seen, one interpretation of the CSS is that the paradigmatic Buddhist king is to rule by the dharma and not by the sword.

Moreover, it is significant that the first of the moral precepts incumbent upon laity and clergy alike hinges on non-violence. According to the texts, all Buddhists are to "refrain from injury to creatures." This precept is important to our discussion for two reasons. First, it establishes that non-violence is a moral virtue in Buddhism, a virtue that extends not just to humans but to all beings. Second, like the other nine precepts, the wording of the first suggests that the precepts are not commandments of the type found in the moral codes of Jews and Christians, as Obeyesekere pointed out long ago.[76] Obeyesekere rightly concludes in his exploration of sin in Theravada Buddhism that one "undertakes to keep" (*samadiyami*; actually, "takes upon oneself") each of the ten precepts rather than receiving a "thou shalt not" decree from above. Despite his conclusions about the differences between the moral precepts of Judaism and Buddhism, Obeyesekere argues that the Buddhist can never over-ride the duty to be non-violent, even though the duty is not a commandment. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 1, Obeyesekere argues that Buddhism never condones violence for any reason.[77] That there is in Theravada Buddhism a duty of non-violence is obvious and undeniable. What is at issue is whether there is an *absolute* obligation to be non-violent because one "undertakes" to keep the moral precepts rather than submitting to a commandment. The necessity of undertaking suggests the possibility of

violence. At the same time, it is apparent that when moral restrictions are imposed from the outside, as they are by God in Judaism, this does not prohibit the development of discussions about violence with limits, or just-war thinking. Clearly, such is not the case. Rather, the point is that, in Buddhism, each Buddhist is in control of his or her own moral destiny. In other words, morality is not imposed but chosen; Buddhism emphasizes the individual's responsibility in moral dilemmas. Thus, as several of the Buddhists I interviewed suggested, it can be argued with equal validity that while it is a Buddhist duty to be non-violent, that duty is not absolute. Pointing to the texts, some Buddhists maintained that there are clear-cut examples in the Buddha's life, or in the stories he related, that point to one's prima facie duty to be non-violent. For the Venerable Rathana, the first moral precept and the military metaphor of the warrior king of the CSS suggest as much. In short, some Buddhists asserted that, though a Buddhist king should be committed to non-violence, he might be called upon to cancel his commitment under certain conditions. Such is his duty and, according to the *Yuga Mehevara* monks, such is his karma – to engage in violence and war.

On balance, however, when compared to the images of non-violence and compassion in the canon, some of which we shall explore in Chapter 4, ideas about war are few and far between. Though sporadic at best, they nonetheless are significant because they suggest relatively early Buddhist concerns about war and violence. Indeed, despite the emphasis on non-violence in the Pali canon, we have seen from our look at the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* that the army does not become obsolete when righteous monarchs appear in the texts, perhaps indicating an admission of the possibility of war. In other words, as some of my informants argued, the military metaphors are an ever-present and constant reminder of the possibility of a transition from non-violence to violence. And while it is clear in the canonical texts that non-violence has priority over violence, the military presence in the texts might suggest that the obligation to be non-violent is not absolute, contrary to the argument of some scholars of Buddhism.[78]

According to Childress, if an "obligation is viewed as absolute, it cannot be over-ridden under any circumstances; it has priority over all other obligations with which it might come into conflict."[79] Read in this light, the CSS's depiction of the just king who maintains his army – even after disavowing violence – suggests that non-violence can be over-ridden, that violence can be justified, if only as a "last resort."[80] The canon's representation of the just king can be translated into the language of just-war scholarship in the following way: as Childress reminds us in his exposition of Christian just-war tradition, the obligation to be non-violent is "intrinsically binding, but it does not determine one's actual obligation."[81] With this in mind, some of the views on the CSS reviewed here, which focus on its just king and army, seem reasonable: the king's prima facie duty to practice non-violence is binding, but violence remains possible and even justifiable in some contexts. But (as is the case with prima facie duties in general) owing to the fact that in Theravada Buddhism it is, prima facie, wrong to be violent, any violent act demands good reason.

Indeed, it can be argued that, in Theravada Buddhism, the idea of the prima facie duty of non-violence shapes morality as it does in Christianity. According to Childress, because it is the Christian's prima facie responsibility not to injure others, violent acts thus demand justification. Yet, according to Childress:

> [T]here is a presumption against their justification, and anyone who tries to justify them bears a heavy burden of proof. [Also,] because not all duties can be fulfilled in every situation without some sacrifices, it is necessary and legitimate to override some prima facie duties.[82]

In the Buddhist context, as my informants suggested, the image of the warlike but pacifist king of the CSS points to a justification for war that can over-ride the prima facie duty of non-violence. However, as in Christian just-war thinking as interpreted by Childress, in the military metaphor of the CSS, the prima facie obligation to be non-violent is not completely canceled even when it is over-ruled.[83] Rather, the prima facie duty of non-violence, suggested by the present but inactive army of the warrior king, is possibly intended to guide and limit justifiable violent acts. If it is over-ruled by another prima facie responsibility, such as, Childress reminds us, the protection "of the innocent from unjust attack, [or] to restore rights wrongfully denied, or to reestablish a just order,"[84] it is not deemed inoperative.

Childress's account of prima facie duties, and his insistence that the commitment to non-violence is never to be relinquished in just-war thought, is reflected in the thinking of the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha. According to the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha,[85] if the *cakkavatti* of the CSS had to resort to violence to protect his citizens or to spread Buddhism, he would have performed an inferior act. This act, moreover, would result in his loss of the wheel as a symbol of his virtue, as the text makes plain. In addition, the *cakkavati's* resort to violence would, by definition, be limited by his commitment to non-violence,[86] for the Buddha "preached non-violence to all beings." For the venerable monk, the CSS teaches that the king's first obligation is to his people and, because not all people are righteous – a point Buddhism also teaches – the king must have recourse to violence, even to weapons in war. But, according to the monk, because the *cakkavatti's* army is for defensive purposes, the text teaches that violence has a specific purpose, and is to be guided by non-violence. In a contemporary Sri Lankan political manifestation of this ideology, and as we have already noted, President Kumaratunga has argued for a war with limits, or for "the highest victory with the least destruction."[87]

The Buddha taught non-violence as the foundation of the dharma. Yet, he nonetheless "admits the difficulty of ruling without the use of force in any manner and under all circumstances."[88] Indeed, in the canon's portrayal of kings, even kings favored by the Buddha, violence and force are realities of rule. This has prompted the monk, the Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera, whom we have met, to argue that, though the Buddha was an advocate of peace, he realized that

a king's vocation included waging war or protecting one's kingdom from attacks and thus was reserved on the matter of war.[89] Moreover, for the monk, the narratives about kings and war are primarily teachings about karma and intention. Thus, the monk can claim that "it is easy to win over thousands of people during a war. But the actual battle is winning over one's own mind and thoughts." For the venerable monk, then, the resolution of each ethical dilemma, whether about war or not, is dependent upon the context; Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera argued that the reason that the Buddha is sometimes compassionate and, at other times, firm, is that he was sensitive to the situation in which he preached.[90] Here, alluding to the Buddhist notion of *upaya* (skill in means), Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera makes a case that ethics are determined by situations.

In the canon, sensitivity to contexts is required by the theory of karma. Given that the Theravadin canonical tradition stresses volition over action in its formulation of the theory of karma, it follows that when war, or any other ethical "problem" appears in the texts, the intention behind actions is featured, while the consequences of the actions serve as a moral story. In some moral stories that include the theme of war, the primary emphasis is placed on ignorance, volitional activity (karma), and their relationship to *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness). For instance, in a story that was cited frequently by my monastic informants, the *Kosala Samyutta*, in which King Ajatasattu and King Pasenadi enter into a series of battles,[91] each with his fourfold army, including elephants, horses, carriages and soldiers (4.12), the Buddha does not condone or condemn war, as the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, an American monk scholar of the Pali canon resident in Kandy, also pointed out to me.[92] Rather, immediately upon having listened to his monks' description of Ajatasattu's conquest of Pasenadi, the Buddha assesses the character of the two kings: King Ajatasattu, who initiates the attacks, emerges as the king who is "a friend of evil (*papa*), an acquaintance of evil, intimate with evil," whereas King Pasenadi, who arms himself in defense, is considered by the Buddha to be "a friend of virtue (*kalyana*), an acquaintance of virtue, intimate with virtue." In other words, in defending himself against King Ajatasattu's military attack, King Pasenadi does not emerge as unethical. Rather, he is virtuous. Even so, according to the Buddha, though virtuous, Pasenadi shall suffer mentally.

Immediately following the assessment of the kings' moral character, the textual Buddha utters a poetic verse, not about war, but rather about victory and defeat and the mental states they produce: "Victory begets revenge, the defeated is miserable. The peaceful one is happy, having abandoned victory and defeat." As the saga unfolds, we learn that negative mental states produce victory and defeat. Indeed, when the Buddha learns that, at times, each king is victorious, while at other times, is defeated, he makes a pronouncement on ignorance and its consequences. According to the Buddha in the *Kosala Samyutta* (4.16), winning and losing are ultimately the same: both are predicated on the ignorance of the evolution of karma (*kamma vivattena*). Winning thus does not protect one from the fruit of karma or from *dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness. Though victorious, the victor is nevertheless a fool (*balo*); he is never satisfied, always craving more victories,

thus breeding more wars. He does not understand that "the slayer becomes the slain; the conqueror is conquered." In other words, offensive war, based on the thirst for power, is pointless.

It is also important here to note that King Pasenadi's life provides the backdrop for understanding other important teachings in the Pali canon. As Elizabeth Harris has pointed out, King Pasenadi's military world is featured in the texts to impart certain Buddhist ethics and values, including the value of gifts.[93] In a teaching about virtue and giving, the Buddha uses the idea of defensive war to illustrate his point to King Pasenadi:

> A gift will bear much fruit if given to a virtuous person, not to a vicious one. As to that, sir, I also will ask you a question; answer it as you see fit. What do you think? Suppose that you were at war, and that the contending armies were being mustered. And there were to arrive a noble youth, who was untrained, with no skill, unpracticed, undrilled, timid, shaking, frightened, one who would run away – would you keep that man? Would such a man be good to you?[94]

Here, as in the story about King Pasenadi and King Ajatasattu, as well as of Ratthapala, whom we shall meet below, war is not condemned or condoned. Rather, war is assumed to be a fact of life and well-skilled warriors a necessity of defensive warfare.

In addition to the *Kosala Samyutta*, monks also cited the *Ratthapala Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya* as they contextualized their comments about Buddhism and war. In this canonical text, impermanence (*anicca*), karma, and craving (*tanha*) are the subjects of the lesson: the *sutta* tells the story of a householder, Ratthapala, who desires to become a Buddhist monk even though his parents protest. Threatening to die if he is not given permission to enter the Buddha's order, Ratthapala finally receives his parents" permission to "go forth from home into homelessness." Soon after his full admission into the monastic community, Ratthapala becomes an *arahant*, an enlightened being. King Koravya, learning that the *arahant* Ratthapala is nearby, enquires about the monk's decision to renounce the world. Baffled that Ratthapala should become a monk even though he had "suffered loss" neither through ageing, through sickness, through loss of wealth, or loss of relatives (II.67.29), he approaches the monk for an explanation. Ratthapala then teaches the king that even though he, Ratthapala, had not suffered such loss prior to his ordination, life in the world is unstable (II.69.38). To reinforce the lesson of impermanence, *anicca*, the *arahant* draws from features of the king's own life and asks a series of questions:

> What do you think, great king? When you were twenty or twenty-five years old, were you an expert rider of elephants, an expert horseman, an expert charioteer, an expert archer, an expert swordsman, strong in thighs and arms, sturdy, capable in battle?
>
> (II.69.38)

The king takes the *arahant's* point, replying that, now, he is "old, aged, advanced in life," that is, he is no longer a warrior prepared for battle. Then, while still using military metaphors to demonstrate the reality of impermanence, the *arahant* Ratthapala teaches the king that not even an army can provide protection from change (II.69.39).

As the dialogue between the *arahant* and the king continues, Ratthapala instructs Koravya in the perils associated with craving, *tanha*, by asking another series of questions that contain military metaphors:

> What do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy and reliable man came to you from the east and said: "Please know, great king, that I have come from the east, and there I saw a large country, powerful and rich, very populous and crowded with people. There are plenty of elephant troops there, plenty of cavalry, chariot troops and infantry … and plenty of women for wives. With your forces you can conquer it. Conquer it then, great king." What would you do?
>
> (II.72.41)

The king answers that he would conquer and reign over the eastern kingdom. Then the *arahant* questions King Koravya about a similar kingdom in the west, in the north, and in the south. Each time, the king replies that he would choose to conquer. The enlightened Ratthapala responds that "it is on account of this that the Blessed one … said: 'Life in any world is incomplete, insatiate, the slave of craving'." Using imagery from war, Ratthapala teaches that craving is never satisfied, and that craving gives rise to new desires. This text is rich in meaning, but, for our present concern, the relevant point to notice is that, amidst all this moralizing, it is craving that the *arahant* condemns, not war per se.

Like the Buddha with King Pasenadi, the *arahant* Ratthapala employs military metaphors as vehicles for demonstrating the efficacy of central Buddhist teachings. And because Koravya is doubtless powerful (as is suggested by his royal wealth and his fourfold army), he himself serves as a metaphor for constant craving and the human tendency to want, for, despite his wealth and power, the king is not satisfied. Given the king's relationship to his kingdom, if he is not satisfied, the possibilities remain grim for his citizens. Indeed, the "issue of kings as emblems or icons of the very idea of order"[95] is apparent in the saga of Koravya, inasmuch as, in the final passage of the *sutta*, he represents all mortals. In verse, the enlightened Ratthapala remarks that:

> A king who has conquered the earth by force
> And rules over the land the ocean bounds
> Is yet unsated with the sea's near shore
> And hungers for its further shore as well.
> Most other people too, not just a king,
> Encounter death with craving unabated.
>
> (II.73.42)

Though this might have been an opportunity for the *arahant* to condemn war, he does not. Rather, he condemns craving, one result of which is war. As the poetic philosophizing continues, the enlightened Ratthapala links craving to karma: "While his heirs take over his wealth, this being must pass on according to actions" (II.73.42); and to wisdom: "Better is wisdom here than any wealth, since by wisdom one gains the final goal."

As in the battle scene descriptions of the saga of King Pasenadi and King Ajatasattu, and in the Buddha's musings on their victories and defeats, here, in the dialogue between King Koravya and the *arahant* Ratthapala, wisdom emerges as the proper alternative to military power, power which only leads to unsatiated desire. In both cases, wisdom is juxtaposed with ignorance or with those who embody it. In other words, in these two stories, wrong views about the nature of karma, impermanence, and craving lead to suffering. Moreover, desire for victory in war serves as the ultimate reminder of the power of craving.

Although it can be argued that the sagas of Koravya and of Pasenadi and Ajatasattu demonstrate that the act of war is an opportunity for teaching about ignorance and wrong views, it can also be argued that, in the canon, wrong views are considered a primary obstacle to moral living and to salvation. Because, in the Pali canonical tradition, particularly in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, wrong views are declared unequivocally to be the "most blameworthy of all things,"[96] it also follows that views, both dharmic and undharmic, are the barometers by which the ethical life is judged. For our purposes regarding the sagas under review here, this is another way of saying that wrong views are specifically condemned while war can be considered one result of wrong views.

Wrong views are unambiguously spelled out in the *Apannaka Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya*: they include the doctrine of nihilism; the doctrine of non-doing; the doctrine of non-causality; the doctrine that there are no immaterial realms; and the doctrine that there is no cessation of being. Moreover, according to the *sutta*, he who holds right views "does not torment himself or pursue the practice of torturing himself and does not torment others or pursue the practice of torturing others." In short, there is a link between right views and behavior toward self and other. If one has right views, therefore, offensive war based on greed or ignorance is not possible.

In sum, then, the canon contains sporadic yet complete military metaphors, and these metaphors are linked – sometimes directly, at other times, indirectly – to the ethical teachings of the dharma. Given that the canonical story that was recited most often to me about the realities of war hinged on a good character (King Pasenadi) and a bad character (King Ajatasattu) – both of whom nevertheless engaged in war – we can justifiably conclude that perhaps the monk editors of the canon, like some of their counterparts today, did not condemn war per se, but rather the mental states that issue into violent behavior. Moreover, defensive war, at least in the *Kosala Samyutta*, is a real possibility, with one architect of it – King Pasenadi – emerging as the hero of the story. Indeed, in the *Kosala Samyutta*, Pasenadi's resort to violence is justified by the context: he fights a defensive war

and, by doing so, perhaps helps to plant the seeds for Buddhist just-war thinking. Favored by the Buddha himself, he protects his kingdom from attack. Yet he, like his adversary, Ajatasattu, serves as a reminder of negative mental states, karma, and the ethical life. Nonetheless, as my monastic informants told me, the righteous Pasenadi – by virtue of being king – was obliged to use violence, despite misgivings, a "catch-22" of the canon.

Dutugemunu and prima facie duties

The *Mahavamsa*, the fifth-century, post-canonical text with which I began this chapter, is shaped by a similar concession, especially its saga of the conflicted king, Dutugemunu. The war exploits of Dutugemunu suggest that by the time the Mahavamsa took shape, Buddhist thinking had developed criteria that served as a framework for debates about which wars are justified and which are not. In other words, though perhaps only the seeds for just-war thought are present in canonical ideas about prima facie duties, in the post-canonical *Mahavamsa* just-war thinking is rather fully developed. Put differently, the *Mahavamsa's* reading of the canon emphasizes the canon's potential for just-war thinking.

The Pali canon suggests that early Buddhists had great disdain for war, as the Buddha's prohibition against monks' watching military parades suggests.[97] Yet, as we have seen, one plausible reading of the CSS and of King Pasenadi's story is that they recognized that, on occasion, war might be unavoidable. However, by the time that the *Mahavamsa* takes its present form, war is not simply a theoretical possibility but a way of life. The fifth-century text abounds with stories of kings who conquer not by the dharma, as the canon teaches, but by the sword. Among those kings, Dutugemunu stands out.

Dutugemunu captures our attention, however, not because he is a warrior king. As I have tried to show in this chapter, the Pali canon lays the foundation for such a paradigm in its complicated imagery of the warrior king who rules by the dharma yet remains equipped with a formidable army. That Theravada Buddhism conflates images of the righteous king, who might have to go to war, and the dharma, has not gone unnoticed by scholars, most notably among them, Tambiah. In fact, Tambiah has argued convincingly that the very idea of, as well as the imagery associated with, buddhahood – itself a particular manifestation of the dharma – are drawn from South Asian ideas of kingship and vice versa.[98] As Tambiah notes, the *Mahapadana Sutta* teaches that there are two careers open to the being born with the thirty-two marks of the superhuman. He can be a world conqueror, that is, a righteous "warrior" king, or a world renouncer par excellence, that is, a buddha. Gautama, born with such marks, became a buddha, as is well known. It is also well known that, according to Buddhist lore, his caste was the *ksatriya*, from which were drawn monarchs and warriors. Thus, it is significant, yet not surprising, that according to Buddhist mythology, another path was open to the Buddha: that of the world conqueror. At death, moreover, both a buddha and a wheel-rolling monarch were to be given the same honors; in the texts, "the bodily remains of

the Buddha are to be accorded the honors of a *cakkavatti's* mortuary rites."[99] In addition, as Tambiah points out, royal metaphors characterize the Buddha's dharma, while the Buddha himself proclaimed on many occasions that in previous births, he had been a wheel-rolling monarch. (As Tambiah reminds us, Gotama Buddha's status as a monarch as an instance of his past lives, however, suggests that it was inferior to buddhahood.)[100] Given the dialectic in which the *cakkavatti* becomes the point of reference for buddhahood and vice versa, it is not surprising that Dutugemunu of the *Mahavamsa* can be the purveyor of the dharma at the same time that he acts like a warrior. The precedent had been set in the past lives, the life, and the death of Gotama Buddha himself. Like Gotama Buddha, Dutugemunu was born with the marks of the superhuman, which suggests that he, too, had two destinies open to him: world conqueror and world renouncer. In the texts, Gotama Buddha's life favors the latter while the life of Dutugemunu reflects the former. Moreover, the problematic affinity between world conqueror and world renouncer, and the potential for conquest inherent in the wheel-rolling monarch, is heightened in Dutugemunu's saga – especially when we learn that his conception occurs when a pious Buddhist monk (world renouncer) chooses upon his death to enter Dutugemunu's mother's womb for rebirth as the warrior king (world conqueror).

In short, as the conflation between the world conqueror and world renouncer suggests, Buddhist warrior kings, such as Dutugemunu, embody a contradiction in Buddhism or, perhaps, represent the possibility of conflicting responsibilities: to maintain peace but to wage war, if necessary. As Tambiah has argued, the mythology and history of South and Southeast Asia are replete with stories of Buddhist warrior kings.[101] Yet, Dutugemunu, among all those Buddhist monarchs, attracts us and is worthy of our attention because his career enacts an ethical concern that encodes a debate about war and its limits. In other words, the paradigm upon which the literary life of Dutugemunu is based – the world conqueror/world renouncer – lays a foundation for just-war thinking in Buddhism. Casting the debates of the *Mahavamsa* in terms of just-war thought demonstrates that demands for the moral justification of war emerged early on in Buddhism, demands that might stem from the prima facie duty to be non-violent. Thus, as some of the canonical stories suggest, it can reasonably be argued that, as in canonical discourses, there is no absolute duty in the *Mahavamsa* of non-violence; rather, there is the prospect that we can be faced with conflicting obligations.

How to cope with those competing duties occupies the mind of Dutugemunu and the supporting characters in his saga in the same way that it has occupied the minds of others throughout human history. For some, the quandary can be solved by exploring the nature of history and our role in it. As Childress stresses, "there are different types of ethics of responsibility precisely because the questions "to whom" and "for what" one is responsible can be answered in so many different ways" depending on one's religious convictions.[102] According to Childress, one's responsibility often hinges on whether there is a "conviction that God rather than man is in control of history [which] may lead Christians [for example] to set

absolute limits at non-resistance, at non-violent resistance, or at violence within limits."[103] In the Christian context:

> John Howard Yoder contends that the Christian is not responsible for using armed force to make history come out right because God is in control, whereas Paul Ramsey invokes God's responsibility for history to argue against the violation of such moral rules as the prohibition of direct attack on civilians.[104]

In the Buddhist context, in general, and in the *Mahavamsa*, in particular, kings, rather than gods, control history, including protection of the innocent. In fact, according to Obeyesekere, "the attempt to give Buddhism historical meaning has been through its kings, as Tambiah has so well demonstrated."[105] In the case of Dutugemunu, the heavy burden of guiding history – protecting Buddhism, while being guided by the dharma – resulted in the clash of two prima facie duties, that is, the responsibility to be non-violent and the obligation to defend the religion. Dutugemunu must answer to the guiding principles of the dharma while he, as king, acts in, and guides, history.

Ideas of justice in war: the *Mahavamsa's* evidence

To return to the *Mahavamsa*, after his war with the *damilas*, we see Dutugemunu who, looking "back upon his glorious victory, great though it was, [he] knew no joy, remembering that thereby was wrought the destruction of millions (of beings)" (XXV.101–4). Burdened by the death of millions of warriors, his troubled conscience prohibits him from celebrating his victory over the *damila* king, Elara. In the scene that follows, the Buddhist criteria for establishing "just cause," or what scholars refer to as one of the most important elements of just-war thought, are expounded by none other than fully enlightened beings, *arahants*, living symbols of the dharma, symbols thus of the duty of non–violence. Indeed, we learn that just cause for war in the *Mahavamsa* includes, in the words of just–war scholars, establishing a "just order,"[106] in this case, Buddhism. Dutugemunu does not go to war for glory, but rather to defend the dharma.[107] Wars for religion, however, as scholars of just war point out, are normally deemed "holy wars,"[108] an expression whose full discussion must be reserved for Chapter 5. But "holy war" can be defined in the present context as offensive war, with religious justifications, but without limits. The nature of Dutugemunu's war is different: rather than offensive war, Dutugemunu wages a defense of Buddhism; in addition, his war fulfils the *jus in bello* criteria, which means that the war is not unlimited, or, more precisely, that there are efforts to restrain the destructiveness of the conflict.

That Dutugemunu's prima facie duty of non-violence has been over-ridden by his duty to defend Buddhism is clear in the exchange between the *arahants* and the troubled king. With their power to read the king's mind, they discern his

profound discomfort for having taken life (that is, King Elara with sixty thousand men), and eight of them travel to his side to console him. Dutugemunu asks them how he will ever find comfort, considering what he had done, that he had killed such a lot of people. The *arahants* respond with their own just-war thinking:

> Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the (three) refuges, the other had taken unto himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts. But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways; therefore cast away care from the heart, O ruler of men.
>
> (XXV.108–12)

In a scene reminiscent of the Buddha's taming of the *yakkhas* that we explored in Chapter 1 of this study, devastation is justified in order that the dharma might prosper. (It is of interest here to remind ourselves of the Dalai Lama's attitudes toward violence that we studied in Chapter 1 – namely, that in order to protect the dharma, "it might be justified for one or 10 enemies to be eliminated – if there is no other way.") In the *Mahavamsa's* homology of the Buddha's and Dutugemunu's actions for the sake of the dharma, the enlightened beings – the *arahants* – counsel Dutugemunu with their criteria for assessing his war with the *damila* king, which includes Dutugemunu's sacrifice of his prima facie obligation as a Buddhist not to take life. For the *arahants*, defending the religion constitutes just cause for war; it constitutes sacrificing one moral obligation for another. Moreover, this scene, with its just-war thinking, reminds us of a feature of the traditional relationship between the *sangha* and political power: King Dutugemunu, not unlike President Premadasa in the late 1980s (during the height of civil unrest in Sri Lanka), who "needed the monks to give him [Premadasa] ritual praise," was consoled by the *arahants*. Premadasa, who consciously enacted the ideology dominated by Buddhist kingship, "felt compelled to commit demeritorious acts and used the Sangha [order of Buddhist monks] to redress the unfavourable balance of karma through his generosity,"[109] that is, through merit-making activities. Dutugemunu, a literary paradigm of Premadasa's self-perception, with guilt assuaged by the *arahants* given their rhetoric of just cause, proceeded on a campaign of merit making directed toward the *sangha*. Moreover, it is also important to note here, and I will develop this point in Chapter 4, that the *arahants'* ethicization of Dutugemunu's actions is symmetrical with commentarial discussions about killing. As the Sri Lankan monk, the Venerable Hammalawa Saddhatissa, among others, has pointed out, in Buddhism:

> The extent of moral guilt of killing depends on the physical and mental development of the being that is killed and the circumstances under which the deed is committed. The karmic results of killing a man and killing a

> child vary in proportion to the physical and mental development of the two. Patricide, matricide, the slaughter of innocent people and of people of considerable mental development are therefore particularly productive of evil results to the killer.[110]

In the *Mahavamsa's* reading of the doctrinal assessment of killing, the killing of only one and one-half Buddhists has fewer negative karmic consequences than the killing of sixty thousand men – for which Dutugemunu initially took responsibility. In other words, the karmic repercussions for killing non-Buddhists are far less than for killing those who embrace the dharma. Moreover, given the circumstances, the monk editor of the *Mahavamsa* allows that Dutugemunu had just cause to kill, to go to war.

According to Childress, in addition to just cause there are typically seven other criteria that frequently appear in comprehensive just-war theories: legitimate or competent authority; right intention; announcement of intention; last resort; reasonable hope of success; just conduct; and proportionality.[111] Indeed, as we shall see, Dutugemunu's saga suggests that Theravada Buddhism develops many of these criteria, albeit it must be kept in mind that this saga is one voice in a tradition that privileges non-violence above all.

Yet the *Mahavamsa* problematizes the issue of violence and war and spells out many of the criteria of just-war thinking to which scholars have called our attention. The criterion of proportionality, or the criterion that, in the end, more good than evil has been performed,[112] had been met from the point of view of the enlightened beings. For them, thousands of beings were not killed, as Dutugemunu had reported. Rather, because among those thousands only one and a one-half were Buddhists, Dutugemunu is responsible for the deaths of only one and one-half persons – from the *arahants'* point of view, a small price to pay for protecting the faith. Thus, the relationship between the evil and the good is deemed proportional in this saga of the *Mahavamsa*.

In a 1998 example of the idea of proportionality and of just cause, a Sri Lankan Buddhist, who refers to him- or herself in the press as "A student," argues that the war in Sri Lanka against Tamil terrorism can be justified from a Buddhist point of view:

> Many people opposing the war … say … that it is very unBuddhistic and say … that the Buddhists [who advocate the war] are going against the teachings of Lord Buddha and support killing.[113]

The editorial's Buddhist argument for just war then proceeds like this: if one's house is attacked by wasps, and one tries to protect one's house, and if, in the protection, wasps are killed, "It's not actual killing that takes place" (so no regret is required).[114] In this line of thinking, the Buddhist obligation of non-violence must be compromised in order to protect Sri Lanka from Tamil terrorists, here

likened to wasps, a figure of speech that recalls the Buddhist logic of the *arahants* in the *Mahavamsa*. Moreover, the deaths that ensue – in the 1998 example, they are rationalized away – are proportional to the need for violence, even war.

Dutugemunu's post-battle regret, which Obeyesekere has rendered as guilt stemming from patricide (in this case, a father substitute), may also be interpreted as the king's grappling with issues of proportionality. Indeed, as Childress reminds us, an attitude of regret, if not remorse, is appropriate when a prima facie obligation is over-ridden.[115] It is important to note here that, while most just-war ethicists include remorse as an important aspect of just-war thought, there is no consensus regarding precisely what it is that is regretted. For instance, both James Turner Johnson and Jeffrey Stout ask whether those who engage in war regret their own action, or whether they regret that the world is in such a state that there is the need for such an action.[116] St Augustine seems to have regretted the condition of humanity, which, being corrupt, is bound to force wise men to wage just wars:

> If such darkness shrouds social life, will a wise judge take his seat on the bench or no? Beyond question he will. … As if he would not all the rather lament the necessity of just wars, if he remembers that he is a man; for if they were not just he would not wage them, and would therefore be delivered from all wars.[117]

In Dutugemunu's case, the warrior king regrets his action of killing rather than the condition of humanity that creates the circumstances for war; his remorse at having killed, however, is relieved when the *arahants* tell him that his war against the *damilas* – his sacrifice of his prima facie duty of non-violence – was proportional to the goal of bringing glory to the dharma.

The Mahavamsa's treatment of the remains of the *damila* king, Elara, suggests that the just-war thinking that frames Dutugemunu's saga contains ideas about just conduct. While Obeyesekere tends to see the honors that Dutugemunu bestows upon Elara at his burial as consistent with the guilt of parricide, following the monks that I interviewed during my field study, I see that one can reasonably conclude that Dutugemunu's guilt is an indication that the author(s) of the *Mahavamsa* believed that there should be just conduct in war. In other words, a Buddhist just war requires just conduct, in this case, honoring the fallen king. The *Mahavamsa's* treatment of the just king is worth repeating here:

> When he [Dutugemunu] had been victorious in battle and had united Lanka under one rule he marched, with chariots, troops and beasts for riders, into the capital. In the city he caused the drum to be beaten, and when he had summoned the people from a yojana around he celebrated the funeral rites for king Elara. On the spot where his body had fallen he burned it with the catafalque, and there did he build a monument and ordain worship. And even to this day the princes of Lanka, when they

> draw near to this place, are wont to silence their music because of this worship.
>
> (XXV.71–4)

According to the just-war thinking behind Dutugemunu's conquest of Elara, just conduct requires just treatment of the enemy, even in death. Moreover, Dutugemunu's homage to the fallen king suggests also that Dutugemunu had "right intention" in his just war, that is, that he fought not because of hatred,[118] but rather for what the *Mahavamsa* deems an appropriate cause: protection of the dharma. In fact, contemporary Buddhist Sri Lankans take pride in the story of Dutugemunu's treatment of the slain king's remains, arguing that the last king of Kandy was captured (in 1815) by the British when he stopped to honor the burial site of Elara, a duty prescribed for him by the *Mahavamsa* itself (XXV.71–4). Indeed, one modern-day Sinhala-Buddhist interpreter of the Buddhist story has suggested that Dutugemunu had to treat the remains of the fallen *damila* (which, in the present, means Tamil) with dignity, for it was part of his code as a warrior, thereby asserting that ancient Buddhist warriors had an agreed upon conduct in war, or *jus in bello*:

> It is recorded that Dutugemunu treated his enemy according to the rules of the ancient ksatriya code [that] all enmity must cease with the dead. He cremated the body of Elara with due honour and caused a monument to be erected there and ordered that all music must cease whenever anyone passed the monument and his injunction was strictly observed even up to the last days of the Kandyan kings.[119]

In short, Dutugemunu's just cause to defend the dharma did not allow for the abrogation of ancient rules of conduct in war.

Mention of the alleged final resting place of Elara has been commonplace in writings about Buddhism in Sri Lanka since at least the late nineteenth century. For instance, an 1889 Ceylon Buddhist mentioned the burial site in a description of his trip to Anuradhapura, where the alleged battle between Dutugemunu and Elara took place:

> The next place we visited was the Ruanweli or Gold-dust Dagoba [reliquary], also built by King Dutugemunu, to commemorate his victory over the Tamil usurper Elara – for whom, by the way, (having killed him with his own hand) he built a magnificent tomb, the remains of which, I believe, are still to be seen, though we had not time to visit them.[120]

In this travel account, the *damila* king Elara of the *Mahavamsa* is now the Tamil king Elara, who, fallen at the hands of Dutugemunu, is glorified in death. Dutugemunu, moreover, is glorified by his merit-making activities, including

providing encasements for Buddhist relics which, the *Mahavamsa* tells us, he set upon at the conclusion of the war. It is significant that, in the modern period, the Sri Lankan leaders, most notably among them, Ranasinghe Premadasa, as we have seen, have also engaged in Buddhist merit-making activities to justify and legitimate their activities.

The charge to defend the dharma guides prince Dutugemunu as he becomes the warlike king; throughout Dutugemunu's saga in the *Mahavamsa*, a connection is drawn between his childhood, his career, and Buddhism. To illustrate, his father, at the baby's name-giving festival, declares that "If my son, when he has won the kingship over the whole realm of Lanka, shall make the doctrine of the Sambuddha to shine forth …" great fortunes will befall the order of monks (XXII.66–8). In short, in the text Dutugemunu's war is justified because he undertakes it to bring glory to the Buddha, just as the warrior-king's father predicts. Indeed, at the beginning of the war, Dutugemunu "made a solemn declaration: 'Not for the joy of sovereignty is this toil of mine, my striving (has been) ever to establish the doctrine of the Sambuddha' " (XXV.16–17). In Chapter 5, we shall revisit Dutugemunu's declaration (*satyakriya*) as we explore further the Buddhist character of the *Mahavamsa's* ideas about just cause.

Returning to the criteria, we find that Dutugemunu's saga suggests that Theravada Buddhism's just-war thinking is consonant in other ways with traditional renderings of just-war thought in non-Buddhist traditions. Concerning the criterion of a "reasonable hope of success," as Obeyesekere rightly points out, Dutugemunu had victory on his side even before the battle began: Elara, his opponent, must have been 70 when he died at Dutugemunu's hand![121] Moreover, the scenes prior to the victory set up the inevitable outcome of Dutugemunu's victory over Elara. In them, we learn how adept and skilled Dutugemunu is at warcraft and how committed he is to ruling, even at the expense of his own kinsmen (that is, his rival brother's army). Thus, the *Mahavamsa* sets the stage for Dutugemunu's victory in scenes that alert the reader that Dutugemunu has more than a reasonable hope of winning the war.

The remaining criteria of just-war thinking that Childress explores, namely, legitimate or competent authority, announcement of intention, and last resort, are to some degree or another important in Dutugemunu's saga. That Dutugemunu suffers such overwhelming remorse after his victory that *arahants* magically appear to console him suggests that the monk author(s) of the ancient chronicle had reservations about the resort to war. Whether it was the last resort remains unclear in the text. Indeed, as we have noted, the scenes prior to the war (the narrative of his birth and the predictions) suggest that Dutugemunu was destined to fight the *damilas* even before his birth. Yet, the two literary configurations of Dutugemunu – Dutugemunu, destined to be the slayer of *damilas* and Dutugemunu, grief-stricken at having killed *damilas* – indicate an awareness in the *Mahavamsa* of the possibility and limits of war.

As a king, Dutugemunu is rendered a competent authority to wage war against Elara, an entitlement of many rulers throughout Sri Lankan history. Indeed, the

Mahavamsa's just-war criterion of competent authority is evidenced in the modern era as post-independence governments have been forced to justify their resort to war. For instance, in 1977, soon after J. R. Jayewardene was elected as prime minister of Sri Lanka, a Buddhist monk, the Venerable Pandita Dampelle Gunasiri Thera, linked competent authority to Jayewardene's legitimate rule, to war, and to peace; in the process, the monk drew parallels between the prime minister and Dutugemunu:

> Prince Dutugemunu from Magampura in Ruhuna appointed fourteen Buddhist monks as heads of administration and all development on dharmista [righteous] principles in fourteen divisions of Elara's kingdom in Pihitirata after the historic defeat of Elara. Similarly, our Dharmista Prime Minister Mr. J.R. Jayewardene with his Cabinet would certainly bring peace and harmony to all Sri Lankans of communal and other differences … [122]

The monk was not alone in his evaluation of Jayewardene; Jayewardene himself reflected on Buddhist texts to explain his position on the use of violence, the role of the state, and his authority to declare war. In 1990, Jayewardene, who by then had become the president of Sri Lanka, incorporated the idea of competent authority as he justified his war between his government and Sinhala insurrectionists known as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), who were later annihilated in a series of counter-terrorist campaigns in 1988 and 1989 during President Premadasa's tenure. Like the *Mahavamsa's* treatment of Dutugemunu, Jayewardene contextualized his right to declare war within the framework of the dharma, which, he argued, teaches non-violence:

> I feel that you cannot attain Nirvana by killing people. One cannot attain Paradise by killing people. Both Buddha and Christ emphasised this [but] … You cannot sit while a snake comes and bites you. You must deal with that snake. The JVP is like that. The State must protect its citizens. … You cannot allow [the JVP] to kill innocent people.[123]

In his comments on the JVP, President Jayewardene declared that "the State [has the right] to exercise violence to maintain law and order to protect its citizens."[124] Indeed, Jayewardene, who asserted his, that is, the state's competent authority to declare war, did so within the context of his commitment to the non-violent teachings of the Buddha. In other words, from Jayewardene's point of view, whether Buddhist or Christian, the State "can use violence in defense of its citizens." Jayewardene in essence argued that his prima facie obligation of non-violence had to be compromised to protect his country, which was his role as *dharmista* [righteous] leader of Sri Lanka.

These dual obligations of non-violence and protection of the dharma and country underlie the saga of Dutugemunu. The *Mahavamsa*, with its reading of the

canonical paradigm of the world conqueror, regards Dutugemunu's status as king as the proper authority to over-ride the prima facie responsibility of non-violence. Moreover, he goes into battle flanked by Buddhist monks, the embodiment of the dharma, legitimizing his authority. I shall return to the army of monks below.

At this stage in the discussion, however, it is worth remembering what we noted in Chapter 1: the just-war tradition, as it has been studied in relation to Christianity, emphasizes two distinct concerns, namely, *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. *Jus ad bellum*, or the right to go to war,[125] is established by taking all the criteria together, with the exception of just conduct. Just conduct, or *jus in bello*, however, includes both intention and proportionality, two criteria with which Dutugemunu's saga deals, as we have seen. Yet, it is not clear that the other aspects of the just-war tradition's prescriptions for right conduct within war, including non-injury of non-combatants,[126] is important in the just-war thinking that underlies Dutugemunu's war. Indeed, the issue of non-combatants is not addressed directly in the *Mahavamsa*, from which one could draw opposing conclusions. It is of interest to this study, however, that in a 1946 recounting of the life of Dutugemunu, one of Sri Lanka's greatest literary personalities, John M. Senaveratne, argued that, when Dutugemunu began to prepare for war against the "Tamils" – "which had been the dream of his life since boyhood" – he repaired roads "for the easy passage of his army." Moreover, Senaveratne adds, "Neither were the needs of the non-combatants at home neglected."[127] Senaveratne, unfortunately, does not provide the specific source for this just-war criterion, though the entire biography is based on the *Mahavamsa*. Along these lines, it is of interest to note that monastic supporters of Premadasa, during the height of the Sinhala–Tamil conflict in the north during his presidency, may also have interpreted the Dutugemunu saga to include the criterion of the protection of non-combatants. According to van der Horst, in a conversation she had with a monk about Premadasa, "the element of Duttugemunu's [*sic*] victory over Elara by means of a single combat was highlighted and interpreted not as the climax of a heroic battle but as an attempt by Duttugemunu [*sic*] to avoid unnecessary casualties on both sides."[128]

While the *Mahavamsa* may leave unanswered the question of non-combatants, it makes clear, however, that Dutugemunu approaches the battlefield with his army of warriors, and with, what at first glance, may seem a contradiction, an army of Buddhist monks. Here, his war is legitimated by the human embodiment of the dharma itself, monks. Moreover, Dutugemunu places in his spear a relic of the Buddha himself, which further lends religious legitimation to his intention to go to war, especially given the elaborate buddhology associated with relics, a subject to which we shall return in Chapter 5.[129]

We must pause to note that the saga of Dutugemunu's weapon – his spear – underscores the righteousness of Dutugemunu's actions. It is significant that the spear, loaded with a relic of the Buddha, miraculously resisted the attempts of Dutugemunu to remove it from the spot where he had planted it after his victory. The amazed Dutugemunu, having witnessed a miracle, therefore commissions a relic chamber, the Maricavatti *cetiya*, to be built over the spear; inasmuch as, in

Theravadin Buddhism, relics are objects of veneration, Dutugemunu thus provides for a pilgrimage site and locus of worship for those who wish to pay homage to the weapon, with its encased relic of the Buddha, that is responsible for the destruction and death of Elara and his men in war. In fact, the *Mahavamsa's* treatment of the enshrinement of the spear within a reliquary provides further literary evidence of Sri Lankan Buddhist just-war thinking: the weapon of destruction in a justified war becomes an object of veneration.

Scholars who presume that Buddhism places an absolute duty of non-violence on Buddhists have argued that the scene of Dutugemunu, with his relic in his spear and headed for battle, warrants justification.[130] My reading of the episode is that it contains its own justification for war. Indeed, it legitimately can be argued that the *Mahavamsa's* rendering of Buddhist just-war thinking entails the prima facie responsibility to be non-violent. In other words, because the duty is prima facie, it can be over-ridden – though the justification necessary to do so is extremely weighty – if certain criteria are met. In the *Mahavamsa*, just-war thinking provides a scenario in which Dutugemunu's violent actions are justified and in which non-violence remains the guiding force. The justice of his war, moreover, is underscored by the fate of his spear, as well as his own fate: according to the *Mahavamsa* (62:81–3), Dutugemunu is to be "the first disciple of the sublime Metteyya," that is, of the future Buddha, surely a destiny preserved only for the righteous. This is why, perhaps, Sri Lanka's first feature cartoon, "Dutugemunu" (1979), highly publicized in the media, played in cinemas for only three or four days before public pressure forced the Jayewardene government to ban it: the cartoon offended Sinhala Buddhists who claimed that Dutugemunu's life is far too sacred to be trivialized in an animated film.[131]

I shall end this section of the chapter by re-invoking and juxtaposing two military metaphors that we have already studied. In the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta*, as we have seen, the most compelling image is the pacifist warrior king who is nevertheless flanked by an army. The symbol of Buddhism, the wheel (*cakka*), rolls forward, spreading the dharma as it moves. In Chapter XXV of the *Mahavamsa*, the most compelling image is the reverse of the non-violent monarch. Rather, the image is of a violent warrior king who governs through war, nevertheless flanked by Buddhist monks. The symbol of the dharma, a relic of the Buddha, adorns Dutugemunu's spear, a spear that in the end kills Elara with sixty thousand men, a spear that also symbolizes Buddhism's triumph.

The story of Dutugemunu's war against Elara is well known in contemporary Sri Lanka and is often invoked to teach lessons about bravery and military prowess. To demonstrate the degree to which popular interpretations of the story are manipulated in the present, one example shall suffice, particularly because it also suggests the degree to which non-Buddhists in Sri Lanka recognize the *Mahavamsa's* power to evoke strong emotions about Tamil separatists. In 1995, the then Catholic army commander, Lieutenant General Gerry de Silva, gave a speech to his troops, urging them that it was their "bounden duty to emulate our

past heroes in this decisive hour." He added that his troops owed much to fallen warriors of the past:

> [O]ur national heroes of the calibre of King Dutugemunu … who undaunted led the nation to victory over the foreign invaders, [are the reason] that we are able to raise our heads as a free nation. In this decisive hour, it is our bounden duty to emulate the shining examples of our past heroes and dedicate ourselves in our relentless effort to annihilate the uncouth terrorists who have embarked on a bloody war to divide the country.[132]

The Catholic army commander ended his message by invoking the protection of God and the Buddha, the dharma, and the *sangha*:

> Let us usher in an era of peace and ethnic harmony through military victories. May the blessing of the Noble Triple Gem and God's choicest blessings be with us in our endeavours.[133]

Drawing on the military metaphors of the *Mahavamsa*, and giving the troops what they expected to hear – an ancient Buddhist story with religious significance – de Silva ratified Kumaratunga's war for peace. Dutugemunu's saga thus provided the beacon for hope that the Sinhalas can (once again) be victorious over the Tamils.

As I have hoped to show here, the military metaphor that shapes Dutugemunu's saga can perhaps be understood as a continuation and development of ideas about war that shaped thinking about the *cakkavatti*, the non-violent warrior king who is nonetheless prepared for war, who comes to life in the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta*. If we fail to see that these apparently divergent images can nevertheless be connected, and if we presuppose, as so many of us do, that the Theravadin Buddhist's duty of non-violence is absolute, that is, that Theravada Buddhism does not allow for the possibility of war with just cause, then we overlook an important dimension of the religion.[134] Theravada Buddhism, like Christianity and Islam, has grappled with ideas about war and violence, and, while it urges non-violence and teaches compassion, love, and empathy, it concedes that violence and war are possible and sometimes even necessary.

Just-war thinking in the 1980s and 1990s

As many scholars of Sri Lanka have noticed, and as we have seen, former President J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka consciously adopted the paradigm of Theravada Buddhism's righteous king as he coped in the 1980s with growing tensions among Sinhalas and Tamils, on the one hand, and insurrectionist Sinhalas (the JVP), on the other. Jayewardene's references to the rulers of the *Mahavamsa*, most notably Dutugemunu, have also captured the attention of scholars, including David Little, an ethicist.[135]

According to the sources that Little cites, and as we have seen, Jayewardene sought to create a *dharmista* society, or a righteous state in which the dharma rules. In such a society, he saw a role for himself similar to that of Dutugemunu: "he thought of himself as 'the inheritor of the Sri Lankan monarchy,' making speeches that 'sounded eerily similar to arguments Sri Lankan kings are known to have made.' "[136] Jayewardene claimed that his government's United National Party aimed "at building a new society on the foundation of the principles of Buddha Dharma. We have a duty to protect the Buddha and to pledge that every possible action would be taken to develop it."[137] Like Dutugemunu, he was willing to wage against the Tamils what he considered a just war in order to promote Buddhism. (It is worth remembering here the *Mahavamsa's* view of non-Buddhist *damilas*: they are non-human. In the context of war in Sri Lanka at the time of Jayewardene's tenure as leader, the ramifications of Jayewardene's views are disturbing to say the least.) Indeed, drawing on images of just kings from the *Mahavamsa*, Jayewardene cited canonical and post-canonical metaphors for just war to defend the use of violence in his regime:

> I cannot follow that [precept of abstaining from killing any living being] because my duty is laid down in the Constitution. … Sri Sangabo wanted to follow Buddhism fully after he became King, so he released all the prisoners. And they started robbing and killing people and the people started saying "we can't have you for our King!" There was big turmoil and unrest and they forced him to resign, to abdicate. And he left Anuradhapura. … I am not going to be like that, I wanted to govern this country, I was elected to govern.[138]

In other words, invoking the Buddhist story of a Sri Lankan king who ruled without violence, that is, Sangabo, Jayewardene defended his position of resorting to what he considered a just war. I shall postpone a fully fledged discussion of ethical orientations until Chapter 4, but it might be useful to point out here that President Jayewardene argued against virtue-ethics, in this case, against a literary paradigm of a king who acts from a sense of justice but nevertheless brings his kingdom to ruin. Moreover, Jayewardene cast his moral responsibility in terms of prima facie duties, particularly the duty to protect his citizens, which might call for killing, a duty that had guided previous allegedly *dharmista* rulers of Sri Lanka. Such historical allusions were not lost on his constituents. According to one of his supporters, "the astute leadership of President J. R. Jayewardene, who is known the world over as a great democrat, will always protect the unity, integrity and sovereignty of this country as done by King Duttugemenu [*sic*]."[139] Yet, detractors of Jayewardene argued that, while Jayewardene might have "professed to follow a 'Dharmishta' policy, [he] steered [Sri Lanka] away from the precept of Ahimsa[140] (Non Violence) taught by the Enlightened One, and [Sri Lanka] became a veritable hunting ground for depraved police officers."

Several scholars have noted the phenomenon in Sri Lankan politics of drawing

justifications for violence from the *Mahavamsa*.[141] Here, I take the argument one step further and add that Jayewardene's self-image was shaped by the *Mahavamsa's* just-war thinking that itself is not an aberration in Buddhism, but rather may have roots, as we have seen, in some of the metaphors of the Pali canon. Though it is impossible, and such has not been my aim, to draw a straight line from the Pali canon, to the *Mahavamsa*, and then to Jayewardene's view of his role in history, his view resonates with the *Mahavamsa's* just-war thinking and, to a certain extent, some canonical passages. Yet, it must be stressed that Dutugemunu's actions, as well as those alleged of the UNP in Sri Lanka, are a far cry from the admonitions to demonstrate loving kindness and show compassion that frame the Pali canon.

The Pali canon's *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* contains predictions that paint a bleak picture of the Buddhist version of the "end times" which, in the Buddhist view, heralds the dispensation of the next Buddha, Metteyya. The text predicts that, as the result of a king who will govern by "his own ideas,"[142] rather than by the dharma, violence will occur, violence that will lead to the destruction of human life, ushering in the absence of dharma, a prerequisite for the advent of Metteyya Buddha.[143] In the opinion of many in Sri Lanka, Jayewardene was one such "king" who forgot the dharma as he exploited the power of his office, ruling by his own ideas for his own gain, rather than by the dharma. His legacy is well known, but remains to be fully understood. As Theravadin Buddhist just-war thinking clearly asserts, power unchecked – power not guided by the dharma – has perilous results. And while this study thus far demonstrates that "[i]ndependence of opinion is still a hallmark of monkhood,"[144] most *sangha* members that I interviewed, whether they claim to be pacifists or not, allow for the possibility of defensive wars with limits for the protection of the dharma, or of Sri Lanka, the island of the dharma. Or, at least, this is how they couch their attitudes toward the Tamil "problem."

Orientalism revealed

I hope that I have exposed the danger of uncritically applying the Buddha's teachings on non-violence to military metaphors in Buddhist texts and to present day manifestations of violence in Sri Lanka. Douglas Allen, in his study of religious nationalism in Sri Lanka, offers a similar warning as he explores, with a focus different from mine, contemporary political violence in Sri Lanka: "Many commentators … have maintained that Buddhism, probably more than any other world religion, is a philosophy of non-violence or benevolent harmlessness."[145] Indeed, Buddhism is a philosophy of non-violence, but, as we have seen, the obligation to be non-violent, though most often in scholarly literature is viewed as absolute, can with equal validity be regarded as a prima facie duty.

I also hope it is obvious that the argument that Theravada Buddhism involves just-war thinking is not thereby an argument for war. Moreover, I hope that it is clear that I am not suggesting that all Buddhists in Sri Lanka who take offense at Tamil terrorism support killing Tamil terrorists. My purpose, rather, is to make it clear how important it is that we examine Sri Lankan Buddhism with the same

critical intellectual apparatus we bring to bear when we study other religious traditions. Although I have used Childress's list of just-war criteria as my guiding principle in evaluating Buddhist just-war thinking, it has not been my intention to force Buddhism into Christian interpretive categories. Rather, my intention has been to begin to free the study of Buddhism from romantic ideas about South Asian religion, South Asian pacifism and South Asian non-violence. After all, if we continue to insist that real Buddhism is the Buddhism of the texts, and only portions of the texts that comport with attitudes of non-violence, and fail to take seriously Buddhist practices that are not endorsed by certain readings of texts, then we are complicit in the faulty production of knowledge about Buddhism, to which Gregory Schopen has called our attention, and which we shall explore further in Chapter 4.[146]

In Chapters 4 and 5, we will revisit the *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum* criteria to determine what, if anything, new the study of Sri Lankan Buddhism adds to the cross-cultural discussion of just-war thinking. Before doing so, in Chapter 3 we will hear more from some of the monks we have already met and begin the task, based on decades of Sri Lankan discussions about the limits of violence and war, of providing the context for the views of Jayewardene and of Kumaratunga – both of whom have exploited Buddhist texts to defend their positions on war, despite tremendous differences between them. According to Kumaratunga in 1997, "the greatest challenges faced by us today are the ugly specter of political violence and the gruesome war. Buddhism has shown us a way to solve these problems."[147]

We shall also see, in the following chapters, that Sinhala Buddhists, whether ordained or lay, have continued to advocate war if certain conditions are met. In Chapter 3, we shall meet Buddhist monks, for instance, who draw on the *Mahavamsa's* legends about the brave Sinhala people and advocate defensive war. As we shall see in Chapter 3, the mythical models for ethical action that emerge from contemporary readings of the *vamsas* and of the canon have inflected, and continue to reflect, the ethical worldview of Sinhala-Buddhist politicians, monks, and military alike.[148]

3

DHARMA YUDDHAYA AND DHARMA WARRIORS IN SRI LANKA

Introduction: *dharma yuddhaya* and its expressions

As we noted in Chapter 2, according to the *Mahavamsa*, the omens attending the birth of Dutugemunu foretold that he was destined to be either a world conqueror or a world renouncer. Unlike the Buddha, however, whose life story is paradigmatic of other heroes in its embodiment of this contradiction or tension, Dutugemunu conquered his world through military prowess; the Buddha conquered delusion, hatred, and greed. As we shall see here, the idea of *dharma yuddhaya* (religious, or righteous, war), as actuality and as a metaphor, both deeply embedded in Sri Lankan discourse, reflects a similar tension in Sri Lankan Buddhism. And it is the *sangha*, the monastic community, that keeps alive the polysemic reading of *dharma yuddhaya*.

In Sri Lankan Buddhism, and according to a contemporary Sinhala-Buddhist commentator, the *sangha* "functions within the historically inherited psychological framework"[1] that holds monks responsible for the protection of the dharma within the confines of the entire island of Sri Lanka. Thus, it is not altogether surprising that we find monks, especially in the 1950s, when Sinhala mistrust of the Tamils increased because of the latter's political and linguistic demands, calling on Sinhalas to fight for their rights despite the pacific dimension of their religion. Indeed, it might be that it is in the monks' reading of the pacific nature of Buddhism, and in their awesome roles as defenders of it, that real, rather than figurative, violence comes to pass for an acceptable defensive strategy.

As I shall attempt to show here, the *sangha's* call for action against corrupt forces – its advocacy of a strong defensive posture, perhaps even a militarized one – suggests, as does a recent study of a medieval monastic Christian text, that the roots of violence may often be found precisely in the discourses and value systems that explicitly claim to exclude or reduce violence.[2] In other words, in the 1950s' example of the Buddhist monastic call to meet one violence with another – to meet the social violence of the allegedly Christianized UNP with a *dharma yuddhaya* – what emerges is anomie, the loss of the sense of order, over which monks, as symbols of the Buddha's non-violent dharma, claim to have traditionally presided. Here, the *sangha*, an institution that phrases its identity in terms of

separation from the physical world of violence, calls for violence to achieve its ends. And Sri Lanka, whose importance in Buddhist history and eschatology has been universally accepted by the *sangha*, is absorbed and transformed into a monastic site of righteousness, in which the promise of Sri Lanka as a utopia collides with the reality of the experience. The transformation is revealed by the slogan "*rata, jatiya, agama*" ("country, race/nation, religion"), which has become the new refuge of political monks, replacing the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, the traditional Three Refuges.[3] One needs only to review the songs of Elle Gunawamsa to notice the shift. In the early 1990s, the Buddhist monk became famous for his songs that combine militancy with the traditions of the *vamsas*. According to the monk's lyrics, the Buddha's pre-eminent position as the first of the refuges, or gems, of Buddhism has been called into question:

> Country, religion, race are my triple gems. Children, I make a tomorrow in your name.
> For us helas [Sinhalas], to be born and die, where's another except this earth.[4]

In these lyrics, Elle Gunawamsa is at his best as he inspires, through song, young soldiers to protect their land, their faith, and the Sinhala people. Weaving themes from the *Mahavamsa's* legend of its great hero king into his song, the monk also proclaims: "It is not to be king that I bear weapons. I defend my land as Gamunu's [Dutugemunu's] son."[5] Proclaiming defensive war that is justified by the legacies of the greatest Buddhist warrior king of the *vamsas*, the monk provided the government with what it wanted to hear. Published by the Premadasa government in 1991, thereby receiving official sanction, Elle Gunawamsa's songs became important propaganda during a period that witnessed increased fighting in the north of the island, that is, during a period in which the government had to justify its own position vis-à-vis the protracted civil war. More importantly, at least for our purposes, the songs reveal the degree to which the idea of war, endorsed by monks and legitimated by the *vamsas*, has become part of the fabric of contemporary Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Indeed, since 1983, when Sinhalas and Tamils clashed in an episode that was justified by monkish religious rhetoric, the expression *dharma yuddhaya* (or the emotional states attached to it) has continued to capture both the texture of metaphorical war and actual, defensive posturing. And in the present, it is the *sangha*, rather than the laity, that knows at some deep level that it has a monopoly on what is deemed to be legitimate violence; it is the *sangha*, suffering under the threat of annihilation, under the unbearable weight of responsibility to protect the dharma, that calls for violence to end violence, as some monks' recent call to finish the war – not by negotiating but rather through war – suggests. Moreover, we have seen that Elle Gunawamsa's songs endorse *dharma yuddhaya* (the monk, however, does not engage the expression. Rather, he attempts to evoke the

sentiments attached to the idea of *dharma yuddhaya*.) And like many of his brethren, Elle Gunawamsa argues, albeit through song, that the *sangha* is responsible for the well-being of Sri Lanka and its Sinhala people:

> The Sangha is ever ready
> At the front
> If the race is threatened
> So long as the Sangha robe lasts
> So long as the Sangha robe, the Sangha robe lasts
> Our country and race, our country and race
> Will shine, O son.[6]

In order to appreciate contemporary attitudes within the *sangha*, such as Elle Gunawamsa's, and amongst lay Buddhists, for that matter, we must return to the late nineteenth century, when Buddhists recorded their ideas about war – both metaphorical and real – in a plethora of publications.

At least since the end of the nineteenth century (when archival resources permit a comprehensive look), Sri Lankan Buddhists have viewed both the struggle with mental defilements (that the Buddha overcame), and the struggle for the protection of Buddhism, most commonly associated with the military campaigns of Dutugemunu, as *dharma yuddhaya* (*yudhaya*) – though it is worth observing that the phrase *dharma yuddhaya* does not appear in the *Mahavamsa*. Indeed, since at least the 1890s in Buddhist Sri Lanka, *dharma yuddhaya* (which, given the many glosses of dharma, can be translated as righteous, religious, or Buddhist war, or conflict, or struggle) can, on the one hand, point to a figurative war: for instance, to the mental struggle with torpor, greed, hatred, and disbelief in the efficacy of the dharma, as well as other negative emotional states that may produce a degraded society. On the other hand, *dharma yuddhaya* can mean real and defensive warfare that is righteous or justified.[7] Despite the range of connotations, however, the idea of *dharma yuddhaya* is usually expressed with military metaphors. An 1898 example of a figurative war, reflecting a concern of many Sri Lankan or, to be more precise, Ceylonese Buddhists, in the colonial period at the turn of the century, urges that Buddhists must fight against corruption within their religion in order to unite successfully against Christian proselytization. In the course of pleading, and while commenting on the Spanish–American war and prospects of a French–British clash, an 1898 Buddhist writer beckoned Buddhists to protect their religion:

> We, too, have a war to fight; but we do not need weapons such as guns. Our war is a "*dharma yudhaya*." It is an opportunity to fight the demon of *mithyadrushti* [non-belief]. Although we have been fighting this war for a while, victory is not yet ours because our weapons are old. We should get new weapons.[8]

Comparing *dharma yuddhaya* to conventional wars fought in North America and Europe, the writer alerted Buddhist readers to arm themselves, figuratively speaking, against Christians. Significantly, the Sinhala writer's 1898 spelling of "war," transliterated as *yudhaya*, contains a Sinhala letter that is not used in contemporary spellings of the Sinhala term. The shift in spelling coincides with a shift in its expression: prior to the 1980s, when the literary spelling was commonplace, *dharma yudhaya* most frequently referred to figurative war. In other words, the literary spelling betrays the abstract referents of war, its mental and social dimensions in the Buddhist context. The vernacular spelling, *yuddhaya*, on the other hand, reinforces the concrete realities of military conflict.

Notwithstanding the 1898 example of *dharma yudhaya* as non-violent struggle, in the same year and in the same Sinhala paper – the *Sarasavi Sandaresa* (which, significantly, was launched in the 1890s by the Buddhist Theosophical Society for the promotion of Buddhism) – an article appeared about the need for a Sinhala army. In its appeal, the article made use of the *Mahavamsa's* history to bolster the case:

> The Mahavamsa and other works state that the ancient Sinhalas were well trained in military tactics. … They even wrote military texts. The Sinhalas were experts in handling the sword, the bow and the spear. The four-fold army[9] did not lack in anything and were ready to fight at a moment's notice. … The Sinhala soldiers fought bravely to protect their nation and were not afraid to sacrifice their lives. When the *demalas* [Sinhala: Tamils; equivalent of the Pali *damilas*] invaded Sri Lanka with their huge armies, the Sinhalas completely defeated them and even conquered their lands.[10]

Alluding to the Dutugemunu–Elara war, among others, the 1898 writer, living in a period of relative peace and ethnic harmony, nonetheless argued for a traditional militia. Moreover, given that the article was published by a newspaper whose purpose it was to promote Buddhism, it can be assumed that the writer – as well as the publisher – supposed that maintenance of an army was not contrary to Buddhism. Given this, it seems plausible that the great Sinhala-Buddhist patriot, H. Dharmapala, who later became known as the Anagarika Dharmapala, writing in 1892, advocated real war with actual weapons against the colonial powers as he rued the Sinhala people's misfortunes:

> National karma had made [the Sinhalas] to go under the foreign yoke of the blood-thirsty Portuguese [who] hacked to pieces little children, destroyed temples and did other manifold activities … The Dutch … The British [committed similar atrocities]. The Sinhalese people have submitted with silence for the simple reason that they have not had the weapons to fight against the intrusion of the scheming missionary.[11]

In Dharmapala's assessment, both karma and lack of weapons – and here, I assume, he meant real ones – are responsible for the plight of the Sinhalas. As we shall see in Chapter 4, when comparing Buddhism with the other world religions, Dharmapala in 1892 argued that Buddhism can never condone even defensive violence. Yet, as his discussion on karma and weapons suggests, he argued in the same year that specific situations, such as Ceylon's history of three waves of colonization, had justified defensive measures of some type.

To understand better Dharmapala's complicated thoughts on war, that is to reconcile his general thoughts on Buddhism and war to his specific thoughts on the plight of Ceylon, due to the country's resistance in defending itself, it might be useful to cast them in the language of ethics, particularly in the language of prima facie duties. In Dharmapala's estimation, Buddhists have an obligation to be non-violent, but that obligation is not absolute. Rather, it can be compromised with good reason: the defense of the island of the dharma, also an obligation of the Sinhala people. Dharmapala's ideas thus point to a moral universe in which certain ethical precepts are not always binding, that is, they are prima facie rather than absolute. In the case of Dharmapala's Ceylon, the Sinhala people have an obligation to be non-violent – their religion teaches them as much – but that obligation is not final. A competing duty, such as the defense of Buddhism or of the island of Buddhism, might over-ride the original duty. Put differently, for Dharmapala, non-violence is ineradicable but over-ridable.[12]

Perhaps with an echo of Dharmapala's complicated ideology about war and its justification, the need for a Sinhala army was advanced during the 1890s, at one point in a critique of a British construction of the Sinhala people:

> I write this in response to the Times editor's article stating that the Sinhalas are the most militarily inept people in the East. … History proves that the Sinhalas were powerful warriors. Thus it is important to form a Sinhala army to protect Lanka.[13]

Arguing against a common portrayal by the British of the Asian as effete,[14] the writer urged a Sinhala militia separate from the British. (The idea of the emasculated Asian resonated among some locals; a Buddhist writer remarked in 1893 that "years of hypocrisy and cunning and of deceit, when thousands of the nation underwent the forms of [Christian] baptism and conversion, have had the effect of producing but little show of manliness."[15]) As late-nineteenth-century critiques make clear, seeds of thinking about the obligation to protect Sri Lanka, which became fully mature in the 1940s and 1950s when they were to be grafted on to ideas about the Tamil, had already been planted by the late 1890s. The ideology justifying the primacy of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, as well as the protection of the island of the dharma, was further popularized in novels and plays during the first half of the twentieth century, culminating in strains between the ethnic communities of the island.[16]

To appreciate fully the developments of the mid-twentieth century, however, we must return to an earlier period, again to the 1890s. Indeed, as some Sinhalas argued for an indigenous army, Sinhalas and Muslims – at least in the areas of Colombo that were covered in the local press – had some skirmishes that became a regular subject of discussion in the Sinhala papers.[17] At the same time that reports of Sinhala–Muslim conflicts were published, some Sinhala Buddhists reflected positively on "the richness" of Tamil culture, arguing in one case that "it is our duty to re-establish the *sasana*, that is, Buddhism, in South India."[18] In this late-nineteenth-century example of othering, the Muslims emerged as the stereotypical, negatively charged ethnic group, which should warn us to use caution in casting the Tamil as the most constant other of the Sinhala since ancient times. Written in 1898, one Sinhala editorial, which bemoaned the lack of Sinhala shopkeepers in an important trade area of Colombo, characterized the Muslim as the bane of Ceylon society:

> it is a great insult that the Sinhalas who own Lanka have no hotels in Fort. When the Sinhalas creep into the dirty Muslim hotels their clothes get soiled. … The Muslims are a lice-ridden filthy race … don't befriend them, visit them, travel with them. Are you blind to the fact that the Muslims are corrupting our race, our reputation?[19]

Though in the present the Tamil has become the Sinhala's most obvious other,[20] a point I and Chandra de Silva have argued elsewhere, at the turn of the nineteenth century Sinhala rhetoric about the Muslim provided the scheme whereby good and evil were opposed in simple terms. And much of the source of the scheme, connected as it was – as the editorial suggests – to who could legitimately claim the island, was economic in nature. Indeed, another editorial, in an estimation of Muslim ability to succeed in business, beckoned Sinhala people not to "be passive regarding your race, your country, your future generation." The writer then suggested that Sinhalas "patronize only Sinhala shops,"[21] a strategy adopted again by Sinhalas in the 1950s against Tamil merchants to undermine their alleged economic hegemony. As Kumari Jayawardena has noted, "We may see that many of the themes of the anti-Tamil propaganda of the 1970s and 1980s had their origin in the consciousness of an earlier period, when they were used against Christians and Muslims."[22] As we shall see, the rhetoric of ownership and protection of the island, legitimate citizenship, negative stereotyping, and alterity, significant in 1890s' estimations of the Muslim, reappeared in the 1940s and 1950s, albeit the focus had shifted from Muslims to Tamils. And while *dharma yuddhaya* may not always be explicitly invoked in the discussion of the other, expression of it – whether as an ideological battle against an enemy, the aim of which is the defense of the Sinhala people and of Buddhism, or as an all-out war – has been an implicit subtext of Sinhala rhetoric for at least one hundred years.

In 1915, a year marked by Sinhala–Muslim riots,[23] study of the island's history

insisted that the Sinhala people and their religion were fused, calling into prominence the career of Dutugemunu. In one representative article of 1915, a Buddhist writer argued that, if Sinhalas were to "take as our example the ancient Sinhalas who maintained Sinhala literature, history and books, … then we will become aware of the nobility of our religion and the strength of our race;"[24] while another commentator asked whether, "even though the *demalas* [Tamils] destroyed our noble works, did we close our eyes?" Addressing "Mother Lanka," that is, the country, and telling her that the "Sinhalas have always respected and protected her sacred land," the commentator proceeded to laud Dutugemunu, who "freed the Sinhalas after killing eleven *lakhs* of *demalas* [Tamils]."[25] In the writer's estimation, Dutugemunu, defender of the Sinhala people and of the Buddhist island, was justified in his resort to violence and killing. The positing of a great and authentic Sri Lankan king – he had served the cause of Buddhism so well – against illegitimate "foreign" presences, including both the Tamil and the Muslim, sowed the seeds for the eventual hegemony of the Sinhala people and of Buddhism.

Though some Buddhist writers bifurcated the Sri Lankan population into "foreigner" and "citizen" in the months preceding the 1915 riots, thereby laying claim in Dutugemunu's story to a Buddhist justification for violence and killing, in the immediate aftermath of the riots, Buddhist rhetoric hinged on the pacific dimension of Buddhism. In one example, a writer implies that some Sinhalas used Buddhism to justify their aggression toward Muslims, which resulted in violence:

> We cannot say that all those Buddhists who participated in the recent riots are unaware of their religion; however, if they invoked the name of Buddhism in these riots, then they are unaware of Buddhism's teachings.[26]

In what appears to be a reflection on Buddhist justifications for violence, the writer condemns them wholesale, stipulating instead that "Buddhism teaches us not to harm any living being and thus Buddhists should always refrain from doing so. We believe that Buddhists should always adhere to this principle."[27] In this unequivocal argument for Buddhism's obligation to non-violence, the idea of prima facie duties, such as the protection of the dharma or of the Sinhala people, is condemned. For the writer, then, the Buddhist obligation to non-violence is an ultimate one, never to be contravened for any reason whatsoever.

One 1915 writer, in an argument that appeared in an ongoing discussion regarding the condition of Buddhism, blamed Hinduism for the corrupt practices of Buddhists, juxtaposing a non-violent Buddhism to a war-oriented Hinduism:

> The *pujas* [devotional religious services] in Kataragama *devale* [temple] have ceased because the god appeared to the *kapuwa* [ritual officiant] and informed him that he was leaving to Europe to observe the war.[28]

Written at a time in which few Sinhala Buddhists made pilgrimages to Kataragama, the eponymous pilgrimage site of a South Asian deity, the tongue-in-cheek commentary chastised Hindus, and (presumably) Buddhists, who worshiped a god associated with war. The commentary appeared on the same day, and in the same newspaper, with an article that summarized the *demala* influence on Buddhism, noting that "Buddhism is the only religion that does not have the characteristic of violence and unseemly humor."[29] Both the commentary and the article had been adumbrated by comments, recorded in the same publication a month earlier, that couched a critique of the condition of Buddhism in the rhetoric of corrupt religious practices of Hindus:

> When King Dharmashoka [i.e., Asoka, whom we met in Chapter 1] spread the dharma, Lanka was considered the promised-land of Buddhism. It was rightly so until the latter half of history when the influence of *demala* kings and their people diluted the pristine Buddhism that prevailed. … Is it difficult to comprehend that just as the *demalas* are barbaric, their gods too are barbaric?[30]

Contrasts of this sort, pitting pure Buddhism against its adulterated contemporary form, were rooted in a perceived dualism between good and bad, non-violence and violence, pure and impure, thereby providing a continuous battle between Buddhism and its forces of corruption, whether Muslim or Tamil. And by focusing on the pacific elements of Buddhism, Sinhalas could bolster their claim that their religion was therefore superior to the rest.

We have seen that, in the 1890s, *dharma yudhaya* was used to point to social struggle that had striking religious overtones. Much was the case in the 1920s, as well. For instance, in the Sinhala newspaper, the *Lanka Naadaya*, an epigraph entitled "Dharma Yudhaya" appeared in every issue during its short run in 1927 outlining the limits of a monk's efforts, expressed in military symbolism, to breathe new life into Buddhism:

> In this twenty-fifth century [calculated from the death of the Buddha], in order to ensure the continuance of the Buddha *sasana* [religion] and the well-being of Buddhists we are launching twenty-seven *dharma yudhayas* through this paper. It is only when we are victorious that we will be able to face Lord Buddha.[31]

Hoping that, through a series of righteous battles, he could effect the rehabilitation of Buddhism – which has remained a constant theme in Sinhala Sri Lanka throughout the twentieth century – the monk contributor to the newspaper rendered *dharma yudhaya* a legitimate means to a profound end.

However, the monk was not without his critics. In the same paper, a writer

questioned the goals and methods of the monk, asking why he had no support from his own cohort:

> Mirinda Ramadhipathi Welithara Panchananda Himi [the monk] is fighting against all irreligious practices of Buddhists within the last one hundred years. Is this situation accurately portrayed by this monk? If this is true, then why are the 7500 monks, who apparently live in Sri Lanka, silent? Isn't it their duty to enlighten the public on the dharma? It is our duty to examine this *dharma yudhaya* which has been launched by the aforementioned monk.[32]

The presumably non-monastic critique suggests that the idea of *dharma yudhaya* was part of the Buddhist ideological system of the 1920s, shared by monk and lay person alike. More importantly, however, the critic questions the use and expression of *dharma yudhaya*, which suggests perhaps that there was some discomfort over the propriety of a monk declaring war, even a figurative one.

As in the 1890s and the 1920s, in the 1950s *dharma yudhaya* maintained its gloss as non-violent social struggle with religious overtones. For instance, G. P. Malalasekera, one of the greatest Pali scholars that Sri Lanka has produced, urged Buddhists in 1951 to undertake a mental struggle to stimulate social welfare; he applied military metaphors as he rallied Buddhists to remain faithful to their religion:

> We should gather the weapons of *maitri* [friendship], *karuna* [kindness] and *shanti* [peace] and prepare for a "*dharma yudaya*" [*sic*]. We have to prepare for a religious fight; a long fight. This is not a revolution but an attempt to protect our ancestral religion – Buddhism. Thus, this is a *dharma yudaya*. This is not a war fought with the aid of weapons. We are fighting for the truth and the dharma. We have to start with friendship and kindness. We have to fight to the end.[33]

In this moral rearmament, which employs the Buddhist rhetoric of peace, intertwined as it is with the sublime mental states, Malalasekera allowed for a non-violent war against corruption in his religion. It is interesting to note also that, in his *English–Sinhalese Dictionary*, first published in 1948 (it remains the standard reference to the present), as part of his entry on "holy," Malalasekera translates "holy war" as *agama udesa karana yudhaya*,[34] rather than as *dharma yudhaya*. This is significant, for it indicates that the great linguist, who also served as Ceylon's ambassador to the Soviet Union, assumed a difference between holy war and *dharma yudhaya*, a point that we shall examine further in Chapter 5.

Like the layman Malalasekera, monks, too, used the expression *dharma yudhaya* in the 1950s to point to non-violent struggle with profound religious meaning. In 1956, regarded by Theravadin Buddhists as the halfway mark in the Buddha's dispensation and thus a year with much religious significance, Buddhist monks

asked the (predominantly Christian) United National Party (UNP), Sri Lanka's first post-independence government, to suspend elections. And because the prime minister failed to comply with their request, some monks launched a *dharma yudhaya*;[35] this *dharma yudhaya*, moreover, was aimed at combating the vices that were corrupting the country:

> The UNP is under the rule of the Christians. Alcohol is eating up the nation. To save this *dharmista* [righteous] land we have to launch a *dharma yudhaya*. Its leaders are Buddhist monks; we [other monks] should join them.[36]

The monks' assessment of the situation and their invitation can be read as more than a metaphor – too much violence is in the air. For the monk writer, the righteous land is to be protected by a righteous war and here, there can be no mistaking the real possibility of monks' justifying war; an advocacy of defensive war, penned by a monk one year later, suggests as much:

> Buddhism has always been a tolerant religion. There are examples of extreme tolerance amidst several challenges. Although tolerance is advocated, at this time of emergency when it is attacked in various ways, Buddhists cannot be tolerant; … Buddhists have to fight to save their lives.[37]

Responding to Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's plans to make Tamil a national language, viewed with suspicion by the most vocal of the monks as a major step in the degradation of Buddhism, that monk's views crystallized an ethical precept of his day: the defense of the dharma. Moreover, in the monk's expression of the prima facie responsibilities of tolerance and of the defense of the Buddhist people, and thus of Buddhism, the duty to protect the religion outweighed the other Buddhist virtues.

In addition to battling unrighteous behavior, it appears that monks who, in 1956, waged a *dharma yuddhaya*, also launched a *bauddha yudhaya*. Unlike dharma, which, as we have seen, given its many valences, can lend itself to a variety of meanings, the adjective *bauddha*, with only one gloss, unambiguously means "Buddhist." In other words, there can be no mistaking the significance of the use of the phrase *bauddha yudhaya*; its application, in the context of the perceived depredation of Buddhism under the UNP, illuminated a specific concept, that is, Buddhist war, albeit an allegorical one. And the architects of the Buddhist war – Buddhist monks – were respected authorities, lending credibility and legitimacy to the struggle.

The monks' 1956 *bauddha yudhaya* was launched "in retaliation to the Lake House papers,"[38] owned and operated by leading members of the UNP which, according to some monks, were the source of Sri Lanka's corruption, as we have noted. In addition to discussions about a Buddhist war, alleged UNP abuses and

irreligious behavior were also charted in the *Bauddha Peramuna* which, as we saw in Chapter 1 of this study, was an early post-independence forum for monks and others to air their grievances against the government. And the *Bauddha Peramuna* did not appear in a vacuum; indeed, the subjects discussed in the newspaper were adumbrated in the writings of the Venerable Walpola Rahula in the 1940s, specifically in his *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*, first published in Sinhala in 1947, on the eve of independence. In the book, the Venerable Rahula advanced, among other things, that monks had historically assumed a leading role in the national life of Sri Lanka. He used Dutugemunu's relationship with the *sangha* to bolster his position.

Although, as we saw in Chapter 2, Walpola Rahula (d. 1997) – Sri Lanka's foremost Buddhist monk scholar – argued in 1959 that "violence in any form, under any pretext whatsoever, is absolutely against the teaching of the Buddha,"[39] in his 1947 discussion of Dutugemunu he justified – with specific criteria – the Buddhist king's violence and war. In doing so, he helped to draw attention to the relationship between Buddhism and war that shortly thereafter became the subject of monks in the *Bauddha Peramuna*. The Venerable Rahula's assessment of Dutugemunu was framed by many of the components of just-war thinking that we noted in the *Mahavamsa's* story of the Buddhist king, particularly just cause, right intention, remorse, and proportionality. For instance, in his discussion of Elara's dominion over parts of Sri Lanka, Walpola Rahula speculates that Dutugemunu had just cause to wage war: "The Sinhalese lost their freedom. The progress of Buddhism was arrested. The nation faced calamity."[40] In the marriage of religion and ethnicity that Walpola Rahula imputes from his reading of the *Mahavamsa* to provide just cause for war, he stipulates that Dutugemunu had right intention: "he was not warring for the pleasures of kingship, but … for the re-establishment of Buddhism."[41] Victorious, Dutugemunu could not celebrate because, according to the monk, he was "remorseful and penitent when he thought of the destruction of thousands of human beings in battle."[42] At this time, the Venerable Rahula asserts, eight *arahants* (enlightened beings) visited Dutugemunu to assure him that only one and one-half human beings had actually been killed, a proportional price to pay for the protection of the dharma.[43]

The just-war thinking that underlies the Venerable Rahula's appraisal of the Dutugemunu–Elara conflict must be viewed as a conscious attempt, made clear in the monk's further remarks, to resolve (what he perceived to be) the seemingly paradoxical nature of the *arahants'* justification of the Buddhist king's resort to war:

> The *Mahavamsa*, the Great Chronicle of Ceylon, states this to be an utterance of made by eight *arahants*. Nevertheless it is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the Buddha. It is difficult for us today either to affirm or deny whether the *arahants* who lived in the 2nd century BC did ever make such a statement. But there is no doubt that Mahanama Thera [the Buddhist monk], the author of the *Mahavamsa* … recorded

> this in the *Mahavamsa*. It shows that responsible *maha theras* [senior monks], as well as the ordinary *bhikkhus* [monks] and laymen had accepted this idea, at least in the fifth century AD, so that it is to be recorded in writing. Working for the freedom and uplift of the religion and the country was recognized as so important and noble … [that] the idea that even the destruction of human beings for that purpose was not a very grave crime.[44]

Juxtaposing two ethical precepts – the protection of the dharma and non-violence – Rahula posits that fifth-century Buddhists embraced the idea of prima facie obligations, with one taking priority over the other, justifiably in view of the conditions of the time. Pointing to the *Mahavamsa's* religious legitimation of the loss of human life to protect the dharma, as well the *sangha's* complicity, Rahula adds that, "What is evident from this is that the *bhikkhus* [monks] at that time considered it their sacred duty to engage themselves in the service of their country as much as in the service of their religion."[45] Moreover, in addition to highlighting what he considered to be the *Mahavamsa's* ideas about exactly what constituted Buddhist monks' religious obligation to their country, Rahula argued that monkish involvement in wars such as Dutugemunu's changed the character of the war: "When *bhikkhus* accompany the army the war appears to be of religious significance."[46] In making these claims, the Venerable Walpola Rahula called into focus and helped to perpetuate the *sangha's* promotion of Buddhist just war, linked as the ideology was to the claims of Sri Lanka as the Buddhist promised land, *dharmadwipa* (see Chapter 1 and below). Indeed, he helped to pave the way for other monks to vocalize their opinions regarding the condition of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and the *sangha's* role in defending it, both of which, we have noted, occupied the pages of the *Bauddha Peramuna* in the aftermath of the 1947 publication of Rahula's *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*.

In the columns of the *Bauddha Peramuna*, published from 1956 until 1962, Buddhist monks commented on many political, religious, and social issues which, at least in the rhetoric of the *Bauddha Peramuna's* contributors, were inextricably related. A cursory glance at its contents reveals that, in the immediate post-independence period, as scholars have observed,[47] monks involved themselves in discussions about politics, state governance, the condition of Buddhism, and relationships between the ethnic communities. Whether or not this monkish discourse was without precedent is a source of scholarly conflict, and need not detain us here.[48] But it is worth pointing out that Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, in their 1998 study that charts changes in Sri Lankan Buddhism, argue that the role and purpose of the monk has been reformulated in the past few decades. Whereas, in traditional Buddhism, "the monk's aloofness is intrinsic to his charisma and the public perception of his role," in the new patterns of Buddhism in Sri Lanka that Gombrich and Obeyesekere chart, when a monk "gets involved in social and economic activity, which he is supposed to have renounced, he ceases to mirror our ideals."[49] Despite the controversy over scholarship, which is

represented by a comparison of Walpola Rahula's ideal of the monk with Gombrich and Obeyesekere's, for our purposes we can claim without hesitation that, in the 1950s, the *sangha's* involvement in the affairs of the state – or at least in discussions about the state – was marked.

One monk, for instance, writing in 1957 in response to the successful election of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, argued in a *Bauddha Peramuna* column that "it is imperative that there are more Buddhists in the army and navy."[50] As the advice to Bandaranaike makes plain, its monk author did not consider that monks should be aloof from the social world, or, more importantly, that being Buddhist precluded serving in the armed forces. Though it is difficult to determine why the monk encouraged Buddhists to join the army and navy – it is of course possible that he thought that Buddhists could introduce pacifism to the ranks[51] – it seems very likely that he, like many of his cohort, believed that Buddhists should protect their country and religion, even if that undertaking should call for military action. It is certainly clear that the monk did not discourage Buddhists from putting themselves in a predicament where they were likely to be required to take up arms.

Buddhist monks: sons of the soil or sons of the Buddha?

Sarath Amunugama has pointed out that Sri Lankan monks exist within a Buddhist tradition that maintains a tension between the idea that monks are to be sons of the Buddha while yet being sons of the soil, a condition that might call for the protection of that soil through violence.[52] Extant copies of the *Bauddha Peramuna* teem with essays and articles that reflect this tension, and I must resist the temptation to reproduce each and every one of them here. A few of them, however, are worth reproducing, for they point to the power of Buddhist stories to shape Buddhist opinion about war in Sri Lanka and highlight the dichotomies of world conqueror and world renouncer. In 1957, for instance, one Buddhist monk wrote about the need for launching a "*dharma yudhaya* against all Western influence and [for] revert[ing] back to our Sinhala-Buddhist habits,"[53] thus underscoring the alterity of the West; another monk reflected upon a more local other – namely, the UNP: in an editorial about a movement within the UNP named "Dutugemunu," the monk claimed that "the name is deceptive for they are actually like Elara; so we must be cautious."[54] In this reflection of monkish opinion – that it is the role of the *sangha* to protect the nation – motifs of good and evil are drawn from the *Mahavamsa*. Moreover, Elara's alterity – as interloper, usurper, non-Buddhist – is aligned with anti-Buddhist elements within the ruling party. As the monk's characterization of the UNP suggests, the *Mahavamsa's* characters of Elara and Dutugemunu, having come to represent, at least by 1957, the ongoing battle between the forces inimical to Buddhism and the forces supportive of it, had also become elaborated with issues associated with the *sangha* and with ethnicity, allowing for the *Bauddha Peramuna's* 1958 epigraph:

> For the last 2,500 years, we the Sinhala Buddhists have never harmed any other race or religion; our intention is never to do so in the future. But, just as our ancestors fought for their race and religion, we too are ready to fight for our rights.[55]

Written in the context of preliminary Tamil overtures in 1957 and 1958 for equal parity between the status of the Tamil and Sinhala languages,[56] the *Bauddha Peramuna*, in its allusions to religious history, sets the ideological stage for a divine drama: the very real defense of the dharma, and of its defenders, the Sinhala people. In this fusion of language and religion, Buddhist monks took the lead; after all, the monks "felt keenly on this question [of Sinhala language]; they were educated in the Sinhala language … and were accepted by the Buddhists as the protectors of Sinhala culture."[57] As protectors of their culture, monks operate within a worldview which assumes that monks are both *bhumiputra*, sons of the soil, as well as Buddhaputra, sons of the Buddha. "Sons of the soil," as Tambiah has commented, "is widely used in India and elsewhere in Southeast Asia … as an emotionally charged overriding claim of the 'indigenous' people to their territory, in preference to 'alien' and 'immigrant peoples' who have come later."[58] Amunugama has pointed out that, in the Sri Lankan context, the *bhumiputra* ideology has fostered discord,[59] insofar as it appeals to, and is proclaimed by, Sinhala Buddhists – both monastic and lay – who claim that they are the legitimate inhabitants of the island (as opposed to the "foreign" Tamil community). The most vocal among Sri Lanka's Buddhist monks, though ostensibly committed to the principle of non-violence and thus "sons of the Buddha," are nevertheless committed to the vision of the *Mahavamsa* which, they argue, creates a bond between the island, Buddhism, and the Sinhala people. From such commitments, they (publicly) declare, therefore, that Sri Lanka must be defended, which might call for violence, as we have noted. In short, in the Buddhist fundamentalism that ensues from this *Mahavamsa* thinking, contemporary monkish and lay interpretations of the text posit an indissoluble link between the nation, religion, and the sons of the soil.

The Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka, therefore, demands competing obligations on the part of the monk: on the one hand, he is to embody the principles of love and non-violence; while on the other hand, he is to defend those believed to be entrusted by the Buddha himself to foster the dharma – that is, the Sinhala people. Moreover, it is significant that the ideologies associated with *bhumiputra* and Buddhaputra, though seemingly at odds with one another, nonetheless are assumed to be connected. As much is true of the layman as it is for the monk. For instance, soon after the death of Gamini Jayasuriya, former UNP parliamentarian and great patron of Sri Lankan Buddhism (and a relation of the Anagarika Dharmapala), he was eulogized as "a Buddhaputra who loved his motherland, Island of Sinhalaya, [the] Sinhala nation who are the custodians of Buddhism."[60] Here, in this conflation of Buddhaputra and *bhumiputra*, a Buddhist layman emerges as a pious Buddhist and an ardent defender of the Sinhalas' island. The conflation is observed in

writings of previous generations, particularly in local newspapers, such as the *Bauddha Peramuna*.

Justifications for war in the early post-independence period

That the *Bauddha Peramuna* underwrote actual war to defend the dharma is obvious in an article it published by Hewapitagedera Piyananda, a Buddhist monk, in May 1958, again within the context of the language debate:

> When Dutugemunu was preparing for battle [against the Tamils] there were many monks who disrobed in order to join the army. Buddhist monks also marched in the war parade. … When Mihindu II was attempting to battle against the Ruhuna province, he first met with the monks to justify his actions.[61]

Writing exactly three weeks before the Sinhala–Tamil riots (24 May 1958), which we shall study below, the Venerable Piyananda contributed to the fusion of the Tamil to the enemy of the country and of Buddhism. In this 1958 expression of demonization and of war – justified by the acts of Buddhist kings and monks – rhetorical denunciation of the Tamil articulated the notion that history repeats itself. Moreover, the demonization of the Tamil is linked to the horror of being "swamped"[62] by the non-Sinhala, non-Buddhist culture of south India, a fear that later found further expression in other events of local violence, particularly in 1977 and 1983.

The use of force in the defense of the dharma is fully pronounced in a 1961 essay by a Buddhist monk whose ideas must be viewed in the light of continued tensions between Tamils and Sinhalas. Though, as we have seen, the *Mahavamsa* served as a foundation for the legitimation of monkish points of view in the pages of the *Bauddha Peramuna*, the Buddhist canon, too, provided the source for the reasonable and appropriate use of force:

> According to Buddhist principles, believers should always practice *maitri* [friendliness]; however, in order to protect the religion we have to peacefully fight our enemies [Catholics are referred to here]. When Buddhism is threatened, we cannot merely practice *maitri*. In saying this Narada Mahahimiyo [a Buddhist monk] provided a justification[63] for active opposition and even drew examples from the life of the Buddha. In one instance when a *mithyadrushti* [non-believer] was attempting to build his temple near the Buddha's monastery, following the Buddha's orders, the king ordered it to be stopped. In another instance, when Lord Buddha was preaching to his disciples, an evil person entered the compound. When he did not obey the Buddha's command, a disciple threw him out.[64]

Validating the proper use of force by alluding to the behavior of the Buddha himself, the Buddhist monk – in the context of the aftermath of the 1958 riots, in which it was alleged that Tamils had been requested to "leave the country or to vacate the traditional Sinhala areas"[65] – provided a moral lesson about the politics of space. And in the case of Sri Lanka, the politics of space is inextricably linked to Sinhala-Buddhist claims to the Buddhist island. In monkish rhetoric in the aftermath of the 1958 riots, then, both Dutugemunu, as the unifier of Sri Lanka, and the Buddha as hero, were recalled to legitimate a point of view regarding the use of violence or of war.

Thus far, we have noted that expression of *dharma yudhaya* as figurative battle, most often presented with military metaphors and exemplified in representative publications of the 1890s, 1920s, and 1950s, was so readily conflated with attitudes about the Tamil in the 1950s that its expression included militant overtones. Moreover, inasmuch as the idea of *dharma yudhaya* in the Sinhala-Buddhist rhetoric about the Tamil enjoyed the authority of the *Mahavamsa*, which has had scriptural strength in Sri Lanka at least since the 1950s[66] (in one case, the idea was represented as enjoying canonical authority, as we have seen) and was perpetuated by monks, it provided for the masses a formulation for the legitimate use of war.

Dharma war: the duel over definition

Notwithstanding the *Bauddha Peramuna's* use of the imagery of concrete war or force with religious justification in the defense of Buddhism against the specter of the Tamil or other forces detrimental to Buddhism, the idea of *dharma yudhaya* as figurative war has continued to reflect attitudes of monk and lay person throughout the later decades of the twentieth century, as a 1978 publication, dramatically entitled *Dharma Yudha*, suggests. In each one of its issues, *Dharma Yudha* published an epigraph that captures one aspect of *dharma yudhaya* in the post-colonial period as both a mental (and social), non-violent righteous struggle; it closely mirrors the epigraph from 1927 issues of *Lanka Naadaya*, which is representative of Sri Lanka's British colonial period's use of the phrase:

> What is *dharma yudhaya*? Any battle that protects the truth is *dharma yudhaya*. Fighting for a fair and just society is *dharma yudhaya*. The historical class conflicts were *dharma yudhayas*. All conflicts that fight against different and wrong theories to establish the truth are *dharma yudhaya*.[67]

As the epigraph makes plain, the idea of *dharma* yudhaya as non-violent struggle has also been employed in the later part of the twentieth century to point to the process of social healing, just as Malalasekera used it in the 1950s.

In a more overt example of *dharma yuddhaya* as internal mental struggle expressed with military metaphors, a Sri Lankan Buddhist, J. P. Pathirana, writing

in 1988 and more than thirty years after Malalasekera, engaged images of combat in his discussion of the nature of the dharma, highlighting the *dharma's* "warrior's creed":

> That Buddhism is a religion of ardent aspiration for the highest good of man is not surprising. It springs out of the mind of the Buddha a man of martial spirit and high aims … Buddhism … is made by a warrior spirit for warriors.[68]

In this expression of *dharma yudhaya*, allusion is made to the Buddha's *ksatriya* status, itself aligned with war (see Chapter 2), while the goal of Buddhism, the "good life," is won through warlike struggle with the mind's many defilements. Moreover, according to Pathirana's line of thinking, "the warrior creed of the Buddha … brooks no soiling of the mind." In other words, clarification of the mind is the goal of the Buddhist who, in the texts, is compared to the conventional warrior:

> The Buddha compares the disciple who perseveres and reaches the … good life to the warrior who continues at the battle-front in the thick of the fray and wins.[69]

Pathirana thus brings into relief a relevant dimension of the Pali canon: military metaphors that point to the purification of the mind. Indeed, writing in 1984, Pathirana offered a more fulsome account of such an internal struggle and, not surprisingly, he included allusions to war:

> The happy way of struggle by which we down the evil in us and the right method of waging a war of victory against the dark forces that plunge us again and again into the sufferings are what the Buddha pointed out. Only by incessant endeavour can the struggle and that war be carried on which culminates in self-mastery and knowledge productive of the highest good of all.[70]

This 1984 expression of *dharma yudhaya* was adumbrated in 1939 by a monk whom we met in Chapter 2 of this study, the Venerable Piyadassi. Like the layman Pathirana, the monk, in using military metaphors to describe the dharma, also highlighted what he considered to be the canonical parallels of the dharma and war: "Buddha Dhamma is a Religion for the strenuous and not for the indolent. It is the true warrior's religion. The true follower is ever on the alert. He goes right onward and never turns back."[71] For the Venerable Piyadassi, and for Pathirana, both of whom relied on canonical Buddhist texts to explicate the dharma, the true Buddhist is a warrior who is prepared to struggle against the mind's defilements.

The layman Pathirana and the Venerable Piyadassi are not unique in their estimations of *dharma yudhaya*, albeit most today use the vernacular spelling. In

my interviews with monks and nuns in 1997 and 1998, many related to me that *dharma yudhaya* refers to the battle against internal defilements, and also to conflicts outside the mind that are resolved "righteously," that is, without recourse to armaments. According to Sumana Maniyo, a Buddhist nun who lives near Colombo, *dharma yuddhaya* "is completely mental. If you look in the *Jataka* tales [the stories of the Buddha's previous births], you will see armies facing each other, resolving conflicts through mental war."[72] Though Sumana Maniyo was vague about the specific *Jatakas* that lend themselves to such an interpretation, she was clear on her point regarding *dharma yuddhaya*: it is a struggle that is resolved in a righteous (dharmic) manner, that is, mentally and without violence. A Buddhist monk, who spoke to me under conditions of anonymity, echoed Sumana Maniyo; he maintained that, to understand *dharma yuddhaya*, we must keep in mind that the Buddha argued that conquering must take place without resort to violence. For him, the objective of a *dharma yuddhaya*, mental in nature, is the conquest of the mind's defilements through right knowledge.[73]

Another monk, the Venerable Gnanapala, suggested that the Buddhist idea of *dharma yuddhaya* refers to "conversion in a non-violent way, or mentally battling the things that hinder us." As we can see, the Venerable Gnanapala, like other Buddhists in Sri Lanka, defined *dharma yuddhaya* as an internal struggle, adding (without my prompting him with a question about other valences) that "militant monks who use the term to describe the defense of the dharma [through traditional warfare] are not good."[74] Yet, he was the only Sri Lankan Buddhist that I interviewed who equated *dharma yuddhaya* with conversion, an equation that many Buddhists – whether lay or monastic – would not make. Indeed, since the middle of the nineteenth century and up to the present, a period in which Buddhists have remained steadfast that their religion is superior to Christianity because it has never spilled blood in converting, parallels between Buddhist conversion and war are not usually drawn. In short, Buddhist conversion – bereft of bloodshed – is a great source of pride for Sri Lankan Buddhists. Which explains the frequency of articles in Sri Lanka's Buddhist publications about Buddhism's non-violent missionary tactics.

Though there are too many to reproduce here, two examples shall suffice to make the point that Sri Lankan Buddhists have great disdain for missionary campaigns that involve war. One representative article in the Sri Lankan press, from 1987, penned by an Indian, vaunted Buddhism's non-violent method of conversion, alleging it to be superior to the world's other religions:

> Probably the mot striking aspect of the spread of Buddhism is its peacefulness and voluntarism. There were no armies marching under religious flags to spread the way; the name of the Buddha was not invoked to offer people the dubious choice of being converted or being slaughtered. There were many good reasons why Buddhism spread as it did; coercion was not one of them.[75]

Another article, published in 1985, lauds Buddhism's approach to statecraft, arguing that the recent rise in Sri Lanka's crime rate might be stemmed by adherence to Buddhist principles, one of which is non-violence exemplified in missionary campaigns:

> nowhere in the Buddha's teachings has he preached "eye for an eye", "tooth for a tooth", about "in defense of personal property", "Holy Wars" etc. etc. Nowhere was the Buddha Dharma spread by the sword, the bullet, by legislation or by a God-given right.[76]

In both these examples of comparative missiology, Buddhism is completely divorced from war, as well as from force and violence. In short, then, the Venerable Gnanapala's allusion to conversion in his explication of *dharma yuddhaya* veers from the consensus. Yet, as we have noted, he nevertheless embraces the idea of *dharma yuddhaya* as an internal struggle against the mind's defilements, placing his ideas well within accepted parameters regarding ideological war.

The non-violent, social notion of *dharma yuddhaya* emerged most strikingly in the weeks surrounding the anti-Tamil pogroms of July 1983. In the weeks preceding the pogroms, the leader of Sarvodaya,[77] a Buddhist social organization, called on Buddhists to practice restraint through a righteous social war of non-violence: "Dr. Ariyaratne … urged Sri Lankans to wage a "Dharma Yuddha" to counter all evil forces and ensure peace and unity in the country."[78] While Dr Ariyaratne urged a metaphorical war against vices, others, perhaps even the Jayewardene government and security forces, orchestrated and planned the riots,[79] which claimed the lives of thousands of Tamils, thus setting in motion the diaspora of Tamils from Sri Lanka that continues to the present. If Tambiah, among others, is correct in his belief that the Jayewardene government in 1983 "gathered information and made plans for punitive action against the Tamils in Colombo" for the killing of thirteen Sinhala soldiers in the north,[80] and acted slowly in calling upon the police and army, who themselves participated in the violence, to intervene,[81] the government in effect marked Tamils as illegitimate citizens of Sri Lanka. This forces us to consider Stathis Gourgouris's model of violence, the law, and legitimacy. For Gourgouris, "the very act of naming and representing the legitimate is a monopoly act, a monopoly of authorizing (and thus enforcing) the boundaries or limits of the law. Whatever exists outside these boundaries is always, potentially, under elimination."[82] Since the case of Sri Lanka's 1983 crisis, the "proximate cause" of which, to use Tambiah's words, was the deaths of Sinhala soldiers in the north at the hands of Tamils, the Tamils have remained illegitimate, outside the boundaries where they are "always, potentially, under elimination." And, in 1983, it was those who enforced the law – the police, the army – who, when they had the opportunity, violently imposed their version of Sri Lankan society: a society which was at once Sinhala and Buddhist, at once a mythic (based on *vamsa* stories) and a legal vision. Along these lines, as Gourgouris reminds us, citing Robert Cover's thoughts on law and society, "law is the projection of an

imagined future upon reality."[83] Put differently, the actions of those who enforce law – who keep the peace or, alternatively, incite violence – provide a window into what society ought to be (perhaps in the future), and not what it is (now). In the Sri Lankan Buddhist case more generally, this utopian motif is expressed through a religious idiom, particularly through readings of stories from the *vamsas*. Justifications for the 1983 violence, for instance, and as we shall see, underscored Sinhala-Buddhist conceptions of society, thereby suggesting that specific cases in the Sri Lankan context express the utopian motif. In 1983, war with Buddhist legitimation – and against non-Sinhala interlopers – served as a paradigm for the transformation to a future, ideal society which, both Tambiah and Elizabeth Nissan claim, was given legal sanction by the state. [84] If it is true that "July 1983," or "the summer of 1983," as that dark episode in Sri Lanka's contemporary history is now known,[85] reveals the closely related aspects of *dharma yuddhaya* – social healing, promulgated by Ariyaratne, and defensive, righteous war – it is also true that militant Buddhist ideology and (later) practice have transformed *dharma yuddhaya* so that today, at least for my informants, it regularly conjures up the idea of war.

Promised lands, chosen people and ethnic violence

The idea of *dharma yuddhaya* – with overtones of conventional, military war with Buddhist justification – is inextricably linked to the notion that Sri Lanka is a sacred Buddhist island, an idea that we discussed in Chapter 1 of this study, and which we will revisit in Chapter 5; as we have noted, it was prominent in the Venerable Walpola Rahula's thinking. In the months following July 1983, tacit authorizations for the violent treatment of Tamils began to appear in the press, which conjured up the image of the Tamil as interloper on *dharmadwipa*. According to a government agent:

> Our island home [Sri Lanka] is thrice hallowed by three visits of Lord Buddha in person. Therefore our homeland is thrice blessed. This land was destined to be the abode of Buddhism. Its manifest destiny was to uphold the pristine doctrine of Theravada Buddhism.[86]

The government agent ended his speech by appealing to Buddhists that they "have a tremendous responsibility to guide the nation on a sober non-violent path."[87] Yet, the subtext of his comments, given his allusions to the Sinhalas' awesome role as the preservers of Buddhism, was that Sinhalas have a dharmic claim to Sri Lanka, while the Tamils do not, a claim which might call for violence.

In the immediate aftermath of July 1983, about which much has been written,[88] the Tamil as interloper was evoked on countless occasions, bringing into sharp focus the *Mahavamsa* story of the righteous Buddhist warrior king Dutugemunu and the usurper Elara. And the story was told on the authority of recognized political and religious leaders as a "true" event, which supposedly took place as narrated.

In other words, the justification for violence in the aftermath of the 1983 event of violence destroyed the distance between the *Mahavamsa* as history and its present performance. Indeed, the *Mahavamsa* narrative of Dutugemunu and Elara was invoked to justify what was considered to be the ethical treatment of Tamils. As we shall see, study of the prominence of the Dutugemunu story in the July 1983 rhetoric affords us insight into the ethical worldview of Buddhist Sri Lanka; it allows us to understand the ethical notions, drawn from stories, that Sinhala Buddhists "embody," to use Hauerwas' term, as they grapple with their role as defenders of the dharma. For, as Joan Young Gregg has recently pointed out in regard to medieval Christianity, a review of religious stories "permits us to discover those unselfconscious cultural notions that, by their frequent hearing and retelling in narrative context, become imprinted on the … mind."[89] But, as we noted in Chapter 1, though Sinhala Buddhists may not self-consciously cite Buddhist stories as they grapple with ethical issues, they engage the stories because the stories have efficacy, thus implying a conscious and fluid testing of ethical worldviews. These views, moreover, reflected in religious narratives, reveal the Sri Lankan Buddhist community's understanding of itself.

In an example of the use of Buddhist narratives to form the Sinhala community's understanding of its basic purpose in the aftermath of July 1983, an MP (Member of Parliament) implied that contemporary Tamils were invaders, not unlike the armies of Elara:

> S. D. Bandaranayake (SLFP-Gampaha) said the Sinhala nation had to shoulder and even face invasions at various times in the history of Sri Lanka in the past. King Dutugemunu had to even face the challenge of Elara and overcome his armies … [90]

We met S. D. Bandaranayake, MP, in Chapter 1 of this study; he was a critic of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's final attempts, before the latter's assassination in 1959, to appease the Tamil minority. In 1958, arguing that "as long as we have Sinhalese blood in our veins we shall not allow the rights and privileges of the Sinhalese to be trampled upon by anybody,"[91] the MP urged the defense of his people, pleading with them to be prepared for battle. Then, as in 1983, he referred to the story of Dutugemunu, and to the prowess and rights of the Sinhalas, to bolster his case regarding the challenge that the Tamil minority presented to the state. And because the occurrences in the *Mahavamsa*, as described by the MP, were, like medieval Christian stories, "believed to be 'history,' that is, 'facts' that really happened, they were believed to have future applicability and thus were appropriate for repetition and reflection, as the future so often repeats the past."[92] In other words, the MP urged defense of the Sinhala people, destined to safeguard Buddhism, so as not to repeat in the future the events of the past Dutugemunu–Elara war. Through a subtle process of identification with *Mahavamsa* heroes such as Dutugemunu, the MP highlighted the lamentable and solitary fate of the Sinhala people in both past and present.

The MP was an engaged observer so struck by the religious significance of what he believed to be the reason for July 1983, namely, the interloping non-Buddhist Tamil, that he felt compelled to communicate it to others as a warning about the future. Notwithstanding MP Bandaranayake's views, some politicians, aware of the use of Buddhist stories as a warrant for violence against Tamils, asked for restraint. They, too, relied upon Buddhism to support their positions. For instance, the then Trade and Shipping Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali (who was assassinated in 1993), reminded Buddhist Sri Lankans that "when passions [are] roused [they should] seek refuge in Buddhism."[93] Moreover, Athulathmudali declared that, in the past, when the Sinhala people were forced to engage in war, they were restricted by the non-violent principles of Buddhism, reminding us of two of the Buddhist just-war criteria that we noted in Chapter 2 of this study, that is, last resort and proportionality:

> Sinhala Buddhists … should speak out to the world and say that even when we are forced to fight in our history in the past we fought with restraint because we were guided by the noble concepts of Buddhism. … Even when we had to fight we fought with dignity and restraint brought about by an ancient Buddhist and Sinhala culture.[94]

Athulathmudali's comments must be understood in the light of the context in which he spoke – July 1983. While there had been clashes between Sinhalas and Tamils in 1958, and then again in 1977, the bloodshed of 1983 was unprecedented. And, not incidentally, in the months immediately preceding July 1983, claims to a Tamil "homeland" (Eelam) in the north of the island, first proposed in the 1950s, became the *raison d'être* of separatist Tamils, that is, of the LTTE. The division of Sri Lanka, however, has been resisted by Sri Lanka's majority community since the proposals for Eelam were first advanced, for the entirety of Sri Lanka, many Buddhists claim, is the homeland of the Sinhalas.

We have noted that, in the 1890s, an assertion of rights to Sri Lanka and its defense simmered under the surface of Sinhala rhetoric regarding the Muslim. The language of rights and the defense of Sri Lanka continued to permeate Buddhist rhetoric in the early decades of the twentieth century. For instance, in a Sinhala newspaper entitled *Swarajaya* [Independence], a monk rallied Sinhala youth to "wake up," arguing that his "nation [Sri Lanka] has become the playground of foreigners … Thus, fill yourself with national pride, act with lion's pride [Sinhala means "of the lion"], remember Dutugemunu and fight for freedom."[95] In his allusion to the colonial presence in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist monk welcomed protective measures against repeated assaults by a hostile enemy, namely the British. Formulating his thoughts on the condition of Sri Lanka and its people in the form of a question, the monk asked the Sinhalas: "Are you really the descendants of the nobles who fought and even sacrificed their lives against foreign invasions in the last 2500 years?"[96] For the monk, sacrificing one's life might be required in order to safeguard the country. Here, ethical behavior associated with

being a son of the soil guides action and ideology that must necessarily conflict with the monk's other burden as a son of the Buddha.

Dharmadwipa defended, Eelam assessed

In Chapter 1, we explored the concept of *dharmadwipa*, or the Sinhala-Buddhist ideology, based on readings of the *Mahavamsa*, that Sri Lanka is the island (*dwipa*) of the dharma and, as such, must be safeguarded. The history of the use of *dharmadwipa* (in the archival sources) in Sinhala-Buddhist rhetoric coincides with discussions about the defense of Buddhism and of the Sinhala people. In the *Bauddha Lokaya* [Buddhist World], for instance, a 1950 discussion of *dharmadwipa* filled the columns, explicating the relationship between the Sinhala people, Buddhism, and their homeland. In providing the life story of an important monk, one editorial offered a history of the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, asserting that "Buddhism prospered due to the Sinhalas and the Sinhalas prospered due to Buddhism. Sri Lanka then came to be known as *dharmadwipaya*."[97]

The focus upon the history and destiny of Sri Lanka is found also in the concept of Sinhaladwipa, the island of the Sinhalas. Its expression was current in the 1958 language debates which, we have noted, were formulated along the lines of ethnicity. In the debate, an organization of young monks, who urged Sinhalas to carry out their demonstrations peacefully against the use of Tamil, bemoaned, in the rhetoric of rights, the dominance of the Tamil language in some areas of Sri Lanka:

> Tamil reigns in two districts and all three languages [Sinhala, Tamil, English] reign in the others in our island supposedly known as the *Sinhaladwipaya*. When sleeping tigers [that is, the Tamils] are awakened we cannot be quiet. Sinhala [language] is in a secondary position; it is our duty to fight against this inequality.[98]

In their statement, the monks waged a metaphorical war against the use of Tamil language in the island of the Sinhalas. In doing so, the successful agent of evil, the Tamil (tiger), was pitted against the Sinhala (lion), the legitimate heir to the island. The monks' statement was echoed by a Sinhala MP, who argued that "even in the Mahavamsa, Sri Lanka is referred to as Sinhaladwipaya, and therefore it is the duty of all our inhabitants to learn Sinhala."[99] Notwithstanding the incorrect allusion to the post-canonical text, the MP's assimilative policy, shared by the young monks' organization, attests to the degree to which the ideology of promised lands and chosen people permeated 1950s' Sinhala rhetoric about the Tamil (and had been internalized). At the same time, it attests to the manipulation of religious stories to justify political postures.

We shall return to the concept of land, specifically of promised-land ideology, in Chapter 5. So far as we need to pursue the matter at present, it is sufficient to note that the issue of land, coupled with expressions of the fear of the Tamil,

prompted one Buddhist monk in 1958 to warn Sinhalas not to give an inch of Sri Lanka to the Tamils:

> Because the Sinhalas have Buddhism's blessings they are inherently a kind-hearted race; but if this is practised beyond a certain limit, it will lead to our destruction. Because we extended this great kindness to the Tamils they inhabited a Sinhala area named Yapa Patuna and renamed it Yapanaya [Jaffna] and made it a stronghold against the Sinhalas. Although the Sinhalas have lived peacefully until now, circumstances call us to fight them [the Tamils] … [100]

The 1958 argument adduced by the monk, – that the entire island, including Jaffna, claimed by the Tamils as their "homeland" since the late nineteenth century,[101] belongs to the Sinhalas – resonated some thirty years later, in 1998, just as two poignant announcements in the local newspapers suggest.

On 1 August 1998, the first anniversary of the death of Mahendra Nath Pitigala of the Sri Lanka Navy was announced in *The Island*, one of Sri Lanka's English-language dailies. In it, Pitigala's career in the navy and his death in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict were linked to the idea of a Sinhala homeland and, ultimately, to Buddhism:

> **Sub.Lt. Mahendra Nath Pitigala**–S.L. Navy who made the supreme sacrifice of his precious life to achieve a sacred goal **A UNITED SRI LANKA** We commemorate your **1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY** with a Dharma Deshana [Buddhist teaching by a monk] followed by an alms-giving to the Maha Sangha [order of monks] the following day. MAY YOU ATTAIN THE SUPREME BLISS OF NIBBANA. Sadly missed and fondly remembered by your sorrowing parents, brothers, sister and sister-in-law.[102]

Pitigala, who gave his life for what his family considered to be a sacred cause – a unified Sri Lanka – was aged 21 at the time of his death. The family commemoration of the death-in-action of the navy man was to be sanctified by the presence of Buddhist monks, while the family's hope for the fallen war hero was that he might attain nirvana.[103] In this specific remembrance, being a Buddhist and being a warrior in defense of Sri Lanka are not incompatible. In short, Pitigala's family legitimated their son's sacrifice for an undivided Sri Lanka through a Buddhist idiom.

In another one-year remembrance of a fallen hero, Major Priyantha Wickramasekera, patriotism is linked to religion; Wickramasekera's death for his country is explained as having its cause in the Buddhist idea of evil:

> You had the lofty ideal of bringing PEACE to Mother Lanka. But "Mara", the deceptor, robbed you of your precious life whilst in active Jayasikuru [Certain Victory] Operation.[104]

In this commemoration, the personification of evil, Mara, robs country and family of a young life. And, given that Wickramasekera died fighting against the LTTE and their demands for Eelam, a tacit assumption is made by Wickramasekera's kin that Mara, the Buddhist god of death, is the agent of the Tamils. The remembrance reveals the degree to which Buddhist stories shape attitudes about war, particularly because the equation between the Tamil and Mara is a trope in Sinhala-Buddhist literature. To illustrate, in its recounting of the Dutugemunu–Elara story and Elara's demise, the eighteenth-century Rajavaliya compares Elara's forces to the army of Mara. And, according to the text, "Elara, attended by his four-fold army which resembled Mara's host,"[105] a formidable power, armed with the same constituents as the *cakkavatti* (as we saw in Chapter 2), is nevertheless defeated.

Both familial remembrances of the fallen Sinhala heroes, moreover, express contempt for the imposition of Tamil Eelam, contempt which is expressed in political rhetoric as well. For instance, President Ranasinghe Premadasa, as he sought to demonize various factions within his own government that tried to impeach him in 1992, remarked that soon all Sri Lankans would know "who is planning to destroy this country in league with the Eelamists."[106]

In order to understand Sinhala-Buddhist perceptions about Tamil Eelam, it is imperative that we understand the history of claims to Tamil Eelam which, at the same time, provides an uninterrupted discourse about war and Sri Lanka's alleged manifest destiny as *dharmadwipa*. Thus, it is important to sketch, albeit very briefly, the rhetoric surrounding the three post-independence clashes between Sinhalas and Tamils – which occurred in 1958, 1977, and July 1983 – because they are linked, among other things, to claims for a Tamil homeland.

What follows is not meant to be exhaustive and I do not presume to nuance all the factors that resulted in the three events of violence. Indeed, taking my cue from Pandey, it is not my intention to essentialize the Sri Lankan "riot," to make each out "to be transparent and immutable entities around which only the context changes."[107] Moreover, the violence of these three post-independence clashes has already been carefully studied and it is not my wish to add to that accummulation of scholarship. What I intend to do, however, is to underscore the extent to which these violent events can be read as critiques of a social reality which itself is constituted by the mythic. Although the 1958 clash has captured the attention of several scholars, little has been written on the 1977 riots.[108] July 1983 has of course been admirably documented and nuanced.[109] Be that as it may, a return to local accounts will prove fruitful at this point, particularly because they are witnesses to the clash of "good" and "evil" that closed the gap between the past of important Buddhist stories and the present.

The sources suggest that, beginning with the 1958 clash, Tamil demands for government protection of Tamil culture, including its language, prepared the way for claims to a separate state – Eelam – particularly when the representatives of the Tamil people came to feel that their demands were not likely to be met. Like the 1977 riots and July 1983, the problems of 1958 must be viewed within the

context of Sinhala claims that the Sinhala people had always welcomed protective measures from Buddhist monks against repeated assaults by an aggressively hostile enemy, the Tamil. By their formulaic nature, 1958 Sinhala claims, like those in 1977 and 1983, reinforced a contested discourse in Buddhist Sri Lanka that provided for justified battles, both figurative and real.

Discussions about the Tamil during the first few months of 1958 reveal the extent to which Sinhala claims, linked as they were to Buddhism, provided the structure for what constituted the ethical treatment of the Tamil. The sources reveal that Buddhist monks and laity alike laid the foundation for the justifiable use of force against the Tamil, effected in the riots of May 1958, in three ways:

1 in their notions regarding the monks' role in history and society (which provided religious legitimacy for behavior);
2 in their politics of space;
3 in their recourse to religious texts and stories.

In this threefold strategy, the Tamil was demonized.

To illustrate the strategy's first prong, according to an early 1958 report, a monk argued that "the connection between Buddhism and the Sinhala race is indivisible. The nature of Buddhism and the nature of the Sinhala character are one." In making the connection between his ethnicity and his religion, the monk then argued for the *sangha's* involvement in the mundane matters of the world: "History tells us that our monks provided leadership at crucial moments."[110] Granting license for the involvement of monks in the affairs of state – based on the activities of his counterparts in Buddhist history – the monk articulated the notion that, in the Sri Lankan context, Buddhism and politics are inseparable. And among the primary roles that the Buddhist monk envisioned for himself and his cohort as sons of the soil was the defense of a united Sri Lanka.

Unity and the politics of space is readily identifiable in the rhetoric preceding the 1958 riots. In April, one month prior to the clashes between Sinhalas and Tamils, a Buddhist monk warned the predominantly Sinhala government to strive for harmony, because "when the government is fighting amongst themselves, the Tamils will unite and take over the country."[111] With the specter of the interloping Tamil, set on the division of Sri Lanka, on the horizon, another monk, also in the weeks prior to the riots, claimed that contemporary Tamil attempts to divide the country mirrored, and far exceeded, the threats posed by Tamils earlier in Sri Lanka's *vamsa* histories: "The repercussions of this to the Sinhalas are far greater than in the times of Elara."[112] In his use of stories related to Sri Lankan Buddhism to bolster his case, the monk revealed the third element for legitimating violence against Tamils: he connected past horrors to present horrors – and to the call to action – by invoking Buddhist moral stories.

Monks were not alone in their use of ancient religious stories as warrants for behavior in the present. One month prior to the 1958 riots, the Minister of Education, P. B. E. Weerakoon, proclaimed in a Buddhist Sunday school visit that

the Sinhalas "need a hero like [Dutu]Gemunu; … The Sinhalas should fight for their rights; the main dilemma is that we don't have many patriots."[113] In a religious venue, the politician incited youth to fight for their country, that is, to fight against Tamils and their claims to the island, just as Dutugemunu had done before them. It must be noted, however, that even though some monks and politicians invoked the story of the warrior king to provide justification for violence against Tamils, others advocated less violent means to secure Sinhala rights.[114] Nonetheless, Tamil claims to a homeland were met with an ideology, linked to a Buddhist story, that legitimated war with just cause: the protection of Sri Lanka for the Sinhala-Buddhist people.

It would be naive and irresponsible to suggest that the troubles in 1958, 1977, and later in 1983, in which Tamils and Sinhalas clashed over claims to Sri Lanka, were solely religious in nature. Indeed, as John Holt has so admirably demonstrated, it can be argued that the troubles in Sri Lanka "have been more economic in nature than religious."[115] In suggesting that "the factors (language and religion) that gave rise to ethnic *consciousness* need not be regarded as the same factors (economic issues) that led to ethnic alienation,"[116] Holt makes the case that scholarship has failed to recognize the multidimensional nature of the contemporary, fraught relationship between Sinhala and Tamil. On this point, I certainly agree. In fact, what I would like to add here is that, whereas the tensions between Sinhala and Tamil in recent decades have their origin in economics and other dimensions of life, the idiom in which they find their expression is religion.

Use of religious idioms to express tensions between Tamils and Sinhalas was a sharp feature of Sinhala rhetoric in the aftermath of the 1977 riots, in which many Sri Lankans were killed. For instance, a leading monk, Madihe Pannasiha, whom we met in Chapter 2, declared one of the causes of the 1977 anti-Tamil violence to be "the maligning of the Sinhala people by calling Duttegumunu [*sic*] a murderer."[117] In short, the venerable monk claimed that Tamil demonization of the Sinhala epic hero, Dutugemunu, resulted in a justified retaliation. The monk's analysis of the situation is fascinating for a variety of reasons. First of all, the Venerable Pannasiha makes the case that, rather than being a murderer, Dutugemunu is a warrior; warriors fight just battles, murderers do not. That the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha understood the 1977 riots within the context of an ancient Buddhist story about a crisis and its resolution is clear. Indeed, it can reasonably be argued that the *Mahavamsa* story of Dutugemunu is a Buddhist cultural artifact that both mirrored and shaped the venerable monk's cultural and ethical notions about Tamils. Moreover, for monks and politicians alike, the narrative of Dutugemunu's war with Elara should serve as a blueprint for action in the present.

That the monk's views were widespread in 1977, as Sri Lankans endeavored to understand the riots, is made remarkably clear in the words of a Tamil MP:

> Mr. Merril Kariyawasam (UNP-Agalawatte) said "… the situation in the country worsened after provocative statements [about Tamil Eelam] were

> made in the House and were published in the newspapers …" "Don't think that Dutugemunu is dead," he told the Tamil MPs present. He said that there was a Dutugemunu in the heart of every Sinhala youth in the country. [And] … because of the inflammatory speeches made by certain Tamil MPs the Dutugemunu in the hearts of the Sinhala youth can come into the open.[118]

Viewing the riots through the lens of the Dutugemunu–Elara conflict, that is, through a Buddhist story, the Tamil politician betrays the degree to which the rhetoric of Sri Lanka's destiny informed majority – and even minority – views of his day.

Like the aftermath of the 1958 and 1977 crises, the 1983 eruption of violence spawned extensive debate over rights to the island, thereby calling into prominence the "sons of the soil" ideology. The collective accounts that have been immortalized in local newspapers, like the riots in India studied by Pandey, "partook of the character of preemptive narratives, … constructed in order to falsify particular 'theories' or explanations of the course of events."[119] In these accounts, little of the government's recorded public discussion of July 1983 focused on the unprecedented deaths of Tamils. Rather, the idea of Eelam – of a Sri Lanka divided – captured the attention of many in Jayewardene's cabinet, a point that Nissan makes in her study of July 1983:

> Implicit in all such statements [issued from the Jayewardene government] is the fundamental premise that Sri Lanka is inherently and rightfully a Sinhalese state; and that this is, and must be accepted as, a fact and not a matter of opinion to be debated. For attempting to challenge this premise, Tamils have brought the wrath of the Sinhalese on their own heads; they have themselves to blame.[120]

And Sri Lanka was not to be divided. Ronnie de Mel, Minister of Finance and Planning, lost little time in claiming, soon after the riots, that "the present Government under the leadership of President J. R. Jayewardene will never allow a division of the country and the establishment of a State of Eelam in the North." More importantly, he linked Jayewardene's attempts to thwart the emergence of Eelam to Dutugemunu's victory over Elara:

> The Sinhala race has a long history in the country. Sinhalese lived more than 2,500 years in this island. We have faced more dangerous and severe threats in the past if we look back into our history. … According to [the] Mahavamsa, Elara a Dravidian king has ruled this country for forty years. He was a dharmista ruler.[121] The king Dutugemunu emerged from Ruhunu and defeated Elara at war. … With all these foreign threats … our culture was saved. … We will never allow the country to be divided.[122]

In de Mel's assessment, contemporary Tamils, like their counterparts in the days of Dutugemunu, were foreigners in his country. Jayewardene, moreover, like Dutugemunu in the past, had the ability to protect the country from the Tamil foreign presence. This he believed, despite the fact that many of Jayewardene's detractors drew analogies between Jayewardene, his UNP government and Elara, Dutugemunu's nemesis.[123]

De Mel did not publicly declare that Tamils should have been slaughtered in July 1983. Yet, by linking the troubles, which precipitated the first phase of the Eelam wars (see Chapter 2), to Dutugemunu's victorious military campaigns against Tamils, de Mel in effect justified Sinhala-perpetrated violence against Tamils. And de Mel used the *Mahavamsa's* story of a great Buddhist king's actions to provide the justification for his ethical stance on the treatment of Tamils. The specter of a Tamil incursion, which would impoverish both the Sinhala people and thus the Sinhala-Buddhist nation, called for violence, even war, with just cause: the protection of Sri Lanka.

De Mel's orientation toward the Sinhala people might best be understood as a minority complex within a majority community, or:

> The expressions of fear of being swamped by an aggressor from near by, giant India, can be regarded as an inversion of the theme of heroic unification of the island "under one umbrella" – as the Vamsas [i.e., the *Mahavamsa* and *Culavamsa*] formulate it.[124]

This minority complex, which stems from the fear of being engulfed in a Tamil social world – given the proximity of the large state of Tamil Nadu in the south of India – fuels and has fuelled Sinhala-Buddhist negative perceptions of the Tamil. In fact, the complicated and contradictory majority/minority status of the Sinhala in the South Asian context prompted Gamini Dissanayake, then the Minister of Lands and Mahaweli Development (who was later assassinated in 1994), in the immediate aftermath of July 1983 to call on Buddhist monks to assure Buddhists that "there will not be a day in [the] future of this country when people will say 'the Sinhala race, the Sasana [Buddhism] and the Sinhala culture is no more and that we have no place to go, we are slaves in the country we were born.' "[125]

In a more recent expression of the nature of the minority complex of Sri Lanka's majority, soon after the 1998 publication of *Races Becoming Extinct From the Face of the Earth*,[126] Sinhala Buddhists debated the condition of their status vis-à-vis the other ethnic groups of the island. One Buddhist wrote an editorial arguing that the devolution package is "a betrayal of the Sinhala people," because, like "the Eskimos, the Maoris, the Aborigines, the Red Indians, and the Samis," Sinhalas are "indigenous peoples," "impoverished due to the lack of land."[127] Thus, a devolution package, which, according to many who fear it, would divide the country into two, would further impoverish the Sinhala people. At least one Sinhala writer, however, cognizant of the Sinhala-Buddhist minority complex, issued a statement in the aftermath of *Races Becoming Extinct* that maintained that, "despite

several Indian and Dravidian [Tamil] invasions followed by years of foreign rule, the Sinhalese population has not diminished in proportion to other indigenous communities inhabiting Sri Lanka."[128] Though playing down the Tamil threat, the author nonetheless underscores a theme of this chapter – namely, the persistence of past narratives in shaping present ethical quandaries.

Dharma warriors and prima facie responsibilities

In my interviews with Sri Lankan Buddhists, and in the Sri Lankan writings I have studied regarding Buddhism and war, one of the most striking features, at first glance, is the seemingly contradictory nature of the discussion. It is not unusual for Buddhists to argue that Buddhism is completely non-violent while making the argument that Buddhists must defend themselves if provoked. In other words, as Gombrich pointed out long ago in his study of the eye-opening ceremony that paradoxically makes present an otherwise unavailable Buddha, here, in my interviews with Sri Lankan Buddhists, "there has been some accommodation of [what my informants perceive as] the doctrinally ideal to the empirically convenient."[129] And if we consider what we learned in Chapter 2 of this study, that is, that Sri Lankan Buddhists argue that they have a prima facie responsibility to be non-violent and a prima facie responsibility to protect the dharma – however much these duties may clash – we are better prepared to understand the ethical worldview of Sinhala Buddhism and its emphasis on contexts. For Sinhala Buddhists, who argue from the standpoint of prima facie duties, one is to some degree morally deficient if one cannot justify war without good reason. Here, in order to clarify the emphasis that Sinhala Buddhists place on satisfactory contexts that permit violence, or even war, it might be useful to note that, as Robert Audi makes plain, prima facie duties do not lack *moral weight*:

> one should, for example, regret having to break a prima facie duty and perhaps must make reparations for it, even when one did right in breaking it. The point is simply that a prima facie duty is not necessarily final, and to recognize a duty as applicable to oneself is not sufficient for knowing what, all things considered, one should *do*.[130]

In the context of this study, the Sinhala-Buddhist prima facie responsibility to be non-violent, as we have seen, allows for the characterization of Buddhism as a religion of peace. At the same time, the duty to protect the dharma, linked as it is to the destiny of the Sinhala people, allows for just-war thinking. Put differently, the tension between the ideologies of "sons of the soil" and "sons of the Buddha" is never fully resolved.

To illustrate the spectrum of prima facie responsibilities as they relate to pacifism and justified war, let us turn to a 1985 discussion of the two ethical responsibilities in which we learn that Buddhism allows for an internal *dharma yuddhaya* and not for armed combat:

> Buddhism and war are a contradiction in terms. Like oil and water they do not mix: that explains why Buddhism has never had any wars in its long history of 2,500 years or more. The only wars we Buddhists are engaged in are wars against evil, wars against vice and wars against defilements of the mind.

Yet, in the same article, contextualizing his comments within a discussion of Buddhism, the writer, D. G. Kulatunge, makes a case for a just war, even for the most righteous of Buddhists:

> No Government, however *dharmista* [righteous, i.e., Buddhist] it may be, can afford to remain static and insensitive to an uprising against the State and cease to use fire-arms in highly explosive situations threatening the security of a country. It is the bounden duty of the State to protect at any cost the life and property of its citizens.[131]

To better grasp this complex move, we must examine the different stages of Kulatunge's argument. While Kulatunge advocates state-sponsored, defensive war, he also admonishes his readers that, "like to say it or not, we cannot deny that we are now in a state of war, and wars according to Buddhism are the direct result of *lobha* (greed) *dosa* (hatred) and *moha* (delusion)."[132] Pointing to a particularly Buddhist referent for the origin of war, or negative mental states (see Chapter 2), Kulatunge was prompted to conclude his discussion with a verse from the canonical *Dhammapada*: "Victory breeds hatred. The defeated live in pain. The peaceful live happily, giving up both victory and defeat."[133] Kulatunge thus wrote in response to the government's war against the LTTE which began in 1983 and urged the application of the prima facie responsibility of non-violence, guided by the Buddha's own words, within the context of a very real war. In other words, for Kulatunge, the prima facie duty of non-violence can be compromised but is never to be forgotten. It must guide external, conventional battles, themselves the result of internal conflict.

While Kulatunge employed the *Dhammapada*, verse 201, itself an oft-repeated sentiment of the canon, to represent the guiding force of non-violence in Buddhism, others have reflected on that verse as they urge non-violence as an ultimate obligation. Indeed, some Buddhists maintain that the obligation of non-violence is always binding. In other words, they argue against an ethical system of prima facie responsibilities. Their views will be explored fully in the next chapter. Yet, in the interest of fairness and in order to present a balanced picture of the competing ethical systems in Buddhist Sri Lanka, particularly given the arguments for war, couched in a Buddhist idiom, that we have examined in this chapter, it is important to present at least one of those views here.

In an article that was published a few months prior to Kulatunge's and thus also in the early phase of the government's war with the LTTE, a Buddhist monk, the Venerable K. Dhammabodhi Thera, pleaded with the government to lay down its arms:

> It may seem necessary to suppress the forces of violence by State violence. But that is not the right way. The cause of violence must be honestly investigated and remedied. The reason is, violence can never be suppressed by violence. Hatred never ceases by hatred.[134]

Alluding to canonical prescriptions of *ahimsa*, the monk concludes his essay with the stanza from the *Dhammapada* that was cited by Kulatunge. As the Venerable Dhammabodhi's and Kulatunge's use of the very same canonical passage to support an ethical point of view indicates, the Sinhala-Buddhist worldview supports competing ethical systems. This allows for *dharma yuddhaya* at once to represent both very real battles for the defense of Buddhism and of Sri Lanka as well as figurative struggles against the mental defilements that might lead to wars.

In sum, the Sinhala rhetoric of peace and its accompanying identity politics during the twentieth century has configured the Sinhala people as a beleaguered group, caretakers of something very special (Buddhism) that has warranted justified defensive postures. For, as M. B. Pranger has recently argued, excursions into the world of violence, in our context, Sinhala Buddhist constructions of the world of non-Sinhalas and non-Buddhists, "may have the propensity to literalize spiritual and metaphorical language, with calls to meet one violence with another."[135] This propensity is strikingly clear in the expression *dharma yuddhaya*, that is, righteous or religious defensive war, and its deployment in writings from the late nineteenth century to the present. In the present, as monks and lay people debate the PA government's peace initiatives, monks can argue that "this is an inappropriate time for peace talks," because they stand within a monastic tradition that allows for the defense of the dharma, even with violence, justified in the rhetoric of *dharma yuddhaya*. Herewith the views of one monk, who alludes to a statement made by the Venerable Walpola Rahula, whom we met in Chapter 2 and who argued publicly, until his death in 1998, that the "war must be finished":

> Walpola Rahula's statement is a patriotic one. As monks, we never advocate war. However, the person who says "no" to a war when it is an invasion is a fool or harbors slavish ideas. Before 1505 [when the Portuguese colonized the island] the Sinhalas never provoked a war. It was always provoked by outsiders. All that we did was to fight for our rights and our inheritance. Even Dutugemunu's war killed many people. Killing people is certainly taking life. Even though the monk Theraputtahbhaya [a former monk in Dutugemunu's army] understood this, he nevertheless disrobed and sacrificed his life for the liberation of the race–why? He did this because he loved his race. He sacrificed something small to save something great. … If the monks only preached [*bana*] during Dutugemunu's war, what would have happened?[136]

In this monk's estimation, killing – in order to preserve the island of Sri Lanka – is justified and sanctioned by the Sinhala-Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka, which

claims that (even) monks have compromised the precept of not taking life in order to defend the dharma. In Chapter 4, we shall explore further the argument, based on prima facie duties and utilitarian ethical thought, that killing can be justified in the context of the protection of Buddhism. In the final analysis, then, and as we have seen, Sri Lankan Buddhism's particular religio-political rhetoric, legitimized on the basis of canonical texts and on the stories of the *Mahavamsa*, allows for the possibility of war if certain criteria are met. At the same time, however, it also urges non-violence, a point that we will take up in the next chapter.

4

BUDDHISM, PACIFISM, WAR, AND ETHICAL ORIENTATIONS

Introduction: within and without violence

Yes! Foreign Minister

"War for Peace" is being waged,
for Jaffna women to be gang raped and savaged
Cheered by some racists,
in support of these brutish rapists.

In a unitary state,
Is this the minorities' fate?
Foreign Minister without mendacity explain;
before to the UN assembly you rush, next to complain.

The murderers of Krishanthi have in court confessed,
contrary to what you, to the UN, have professed.
Dig up, as in Embilipitiya, the Jaffna pits,
to prove that you aren't living by your wits.

The pits will reveal the Pol-Pot style genocide,
Committed by the PA whose policies you guide.
Though a respected International Lawyer,
You may go down in History as a human rights violator.

What has happened to the (GLP) empty Political Package,
which you always carry in you "Foreign Ministry" baggage,
To deceive the international community,
about the "War for Peace" reality.

Why not end this senseless carnage,
by crafting a genuine Political Package.
This barbarism has gone on for 15 years,
long enough to fill the Parakrama Samudra with
Lankan Mothers' tears.

A Mother of Lanka, Kalutara[1]

The author of this 1998 poem provides an example of the kind of ethical thinking that shapes Sri Lankan discussions about war, in general, and the Sinhala–Tamil conflict, in particular. It can be argued that our poet's ethical orientation is deontological, inasmuch as she is focused on the action of war and on what she perceives to be one's duty not to engage in war. Other Sri Lankans have framed their discourse on war with a type of utilitarianism,[2] which asserts that "we ought always to produce the greatest possible balance of value over disvalue."[3] Still other Sri Lankans have invoked versions of virtue ethics, which asks the basic question, "Who should I be?," as they contemplate the morally problematic category of war. In this chapter, each of these three modes of thought shall be explored in a study that combines the results of my field experiences with publications on or about war in Buddhist Sri Lanka. While ethicists doubtless would want to investigate in greater detail the differences between the three types of ethical thinking, I have been content to find their general affinities and to chart their fortunes as Sri Lankan discourse about war has been forced to move from the theoretical to the practical, nurtured by the ongoing Sinhala–Tamil conflict. In charting their general affinities, moreover, I hope to demonstrate that Sinhala Buddhism is ambivalent about war. In other words, I hope to show that, depending on the context (and depending on the Buddhist), the Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka condemns, with as much frequency as it justifies, war and its violent legacies in defense of the dharma or of the island.

I begin this discussion on Sri Lankan ethical thought on war with our Kalutara mother's poem. In her poem, filled with irony, poignancy and wit, the Sri Lankan mother – neither her ethnicity nor her religion can be deduced – lambasts the Secretary of Defense, Lakshman Kadirgamar, and the Minister of Constitutional Affairs, G. L. Peiris, for their inability to end, at the time of her writing, Sri Lanka's fifteen-year-old war between the predominantly Sinhala government and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). In the course of her poetic dissertation on what she considers to be the PA government's inefficiency and corruption – including an uncivilized militia, responsible for the rape and murder of a young Tamil woman in Jaffna, and genocide – the Sri Lankan mother chides the government's alleged "war for peace," in which the international standards of just war are met, as we saw in Chapter 2. Moreover, as we also saw in that chapter, inasmuch as the war for peace accommodates indigenous thinking on the relationship between religion and governance, its ideology is a just-war thinking that is at once international and local. In mocking the government's war for peace, however, and in advocating a political package that is not tied to war, the poet advances the position that a pacific means to solving the island's troubles is in order. In other words, in the case of the Sri Lankan war, she advocates peace solely through political negotiation.

Moreover, in the reference to the tears of women who have lost their children in the war – so many tears that they can fill an ancient irrigation tank – the Sri Lankan mother comments on the futility and immorality of war; she focuses not on the consequences or the outcome, which the government (publicly) hopes might

be peace, but rather on the characteristics of war which, for her, are morally unacceptable. In short, the Kalutara mother counters the government's ethical stance on war – which may be identified as utilitarian, insofar as the government argues, as we saw in Chapter 2, that the "end" (peace) justifies the "means" (war) – by problematizing the act of war rather than its consequences. Thus, the action of war is morally wrong, based on the principle that violence is morally wrong. We shall see that Sri Lankans have engaged, and continue to engage, a variety of types of ethical thinking, including deontological, such as our poet, and utilitarian (or, consequentialist), such as the Kumaratunga government, as they grapple with issues related to war, in general, and to the Sinhala–Tamil conflict, in particular. We shall also discover, however, as Tom Beauchamp and James Childress have pointed out, that "it is a mistake to suppose that a single great divide separates all moral theorists neatly into consequentialists and nonconsequentialists."[4]

But first we must appreciate that the spirit of the poet's lyrics about the Sinhala–Tamil conflict has been captured in other Sri Lankans' sentiments about war; indeed, the Sri Lankan mother is not the first to criticize Kumaratunga and her PA government's war for peace. For, opposition to war, in general, has a long history in Sri Lanka, and certainly spans the period under review in this study – namely, the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. While our 1998 poet does not refer to religion, but rather to the horrors of war (and of political corruption), to advocate a political settlement for the present troubles, modern Sri Lankan history is rife with commentaries on the evils of war that are framed by allusions to religion.

In Chapter 3, we examined late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century essays from a variety of sources, including *The Buddhist*, in an effort to appreciate the nature of the local discourse on war and Buddhism and the ways in which that discourse has shaped ideologies relating to *dharma yuddhaya*. Here, in an examination of many of the same resources from the same period, I shall provide an account of Sinhala-Buddhist perceptions of Buddhism and identity, themes clearly related to *dharma yuddhaya*, in order illuminate Sri Lankan ethical orientations to war. I shall begin by exploring the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a period in which English-speaking Ceylonese Buddhists honed for themselves an identity in print, particularly in *The Buddhist*. As we have been noting throughout this study, Buddhists "imagined" a community, to use Benedict Anderson's terms, within the pages of *The Buddhist*, boasting a superior religious history that was based on a doctrine of pacifism. It is true, as we saw in Chapter 3, that this period also witnessed a heightened interest in militias and in marking off authentic Ceylonese from interlopers on a sacred Buddhist island. Yet, at the same time, it nurtured a rhetoric of peace and pacifism, itself a phenomenon that must be viewed within the context of a dialogue that Buddhists were having with each other, one which constructed Buddhism as pacific, in contrast with Christianity and (to a lesser extent) Islam. To illustrate this tendency, a leading Buddhist of the period, H. Dharmapala, later known as the Anagarika Dharmapala, opposed even defensive measures early in his career (notwithstanding his later writings), which

is clear from his critique of Muslim missionary tactics and rule in India; Buddhism, unlike Islam, is "based on love, promulgating a doctrine of universal love, it can neither use force or violence nor offer resistance to persecution."[5] Engaging the Buddhist principle of love, Dharmapala engages in a deontology that condemns the action of war. Though Dharmapala's later thoughts on non-Buddhists may have helped to lay the ideological groundwork for twentieth-century violence against Tamils, a point underscored by Tambiah among others, Dharmapala's ideas about war are nevertheless far from being uncomplicated. For Dharmapala, at least at one point early in his career, promotion of religion through war or violence, in general, points to its debased condition. In this 1892 recorded thought on war, then, Dharmapala appeals to a Buddhist principle – that violence is wrong for any reason, including defense – to underscore the moral worth of his own religion. Indeed, as H. L. Seneviratne has recently pointed out, Dharmapala, availing himself of military metaphors (as we might expect given the evidence of Chapter 3), imagined an army – so to speak – consisting of Buddhist monks who would "fight" for Buddhism. And, as we have come to expect, Dharmapala shaped his military analogies and metaphors in relation to his experience of Christianity on the island, proclaiming that Buddhists should express their love of the dharma by sounding traditional musical instruments and waving traditional symbols. According to Seneviratne:

> Clearly the idea of the Salvation Army generated in Dharmapala's mind a counter army, identical to the enemy's except for the message. It is noteworthy, however, that the army is legitimized in relation to the "orders" that the Buddha himself gave, and Dharmapala Buddhisizes the military regalia – the drum, the flag, and the conch, which recall the Buddhist "regalia" like the relic and the monk himself militarized in the *Mahavamsa* account of the campaign of Duttagamani [Dutugemunu].[6]

As Seneviratne concludes, Dharmapala's ideas on Buddhist warriors for the dharma provide "a clue to the thin line in religion between piety and warriordom"[7] that we have been tracing throughout this study. Nonetheless, in Dharmapala's general assessments regarding war, Buddhism and actual warfare are antithetical.

Dharmapala's general thoughts on war were reiterated by others throughout the period. For instance, another 1892 English-speaking Buddhist, in a retrospective of Christian history, finds no ethical thinking within Buddhism to justify war:

> We are no defenders of bloodshed, no apologists for murder, and we cannot do otherwise than commence this article by expressing our own sadness … that in 1424, consequent on the violent death of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, a thoroughly Christian war arose … [both sides] agreed that it was innocent and lawful to extirpate with fire and sword the enemies of true religion. … If Constantine had been an Infidel, no

> excuse would exist for his bloody deeds, his treacherous life, his most monstrous career; but by faith, if your sins are red as blood, they become as white as the snow-drift.[8]

In short, Christianity justifies war, Buddhism does not.

How do we reconcile such an attitude about war with late-nineteenth-century Ceylon's tendency toward a political and religious rhetoric that was beginning to recognize justifications for violence against non-Sinhalas? The answer to this question may lie in the very construction of Buddhism as pacific. Allow me to explain by providing further examples of Buddhist comparative missiology which, as has been noted here and in Chapter 3, boasts a peaceful religion that converts by the intellect rather than by the sword. For instance, an 1894 contributor to *The Buddhist* vaunted a peaceful conversion method to demonstrate the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity:

> A band of Indian Aryans, in the garb of mendicants, with *love* on their shields, proceeding from the cells [monasteries] of Patilaputra [the seat of Asoka's kingdom], crossing territories, mountains, rivers, penetrating into empires, standing before the literati, and promulgating a new universal religion … establish[ed] the Aryan civilization [i.e., Buddhism] in countries outside of India.[9]

It is significant that the writer uses military metaphors to express the non-violent conquest of Buddhism. As we saw in Chapter 3, the use of military metaphors to signify peaceful conquest, whether internally (such as victory over the mental defilements) or externally (such as victory over social evils), has remained a trope in Sinhala-Buddhist writings since the late nineteenth century. Homologies between the battlefield and bliss express the same tension as metaphorical *dharma yuddhaya*, that is, the fine line that separates the symbolism of war from its practice. Moreover, as an 1894 editorial suggests, the construction of a type of Buddhism that only had peaceful triumphs in its missionary campaigns served as a powerful polemic against Christians, particularly for English-speaking Buddhists in the late nineteenth century:

> Buddhism has made all its conquests honourably, by a process of rational appeal to the human mind. It was never propagated by force, even when it had the power of imperial rajas [kings] to support it. Buddhism has not been without its superstition, but it has founded no inquisitions, and has no prejudice against another faith.[10]

In short, Buddhism is a religion of reason and of peace whereas Christianity is not, a point that Buddhists never tired of making.

Consider, for example, an 1896 description in *The Buddhist* of Dharmapala's

efforts to reclaim Bodh Gaya (in India, the site traditionally considered to be the location of the Buddha's enlightenment):

> History oft repeats itself is a truism which finds a parallel in this case. Mr. Dharmapala's energy and enthusiasm in the case of Buddha Gaya may be likened to the zeal of Peter the Hermit … for the recovery of the "holy" land. If Buddhism were a bloodthirsty religion depending upon the sword for the assertion of rights, the sad story of the maltreatment, which harmless pilgrim monks have suffered, might have roused a war for religion which would have been joined by soldiers enlisting amongst Sinhalese, Arakanese, Siamese, Burmese, Chinese and Japanese … But we trust to peaceful and diplomatic settlement of rights, and compensation for the wrongs committed.[11]

The editor thus frames his response to war just as a deontologist might: in an appeal to the Buddhist duty and principle of non-violence, he presents the idea that war is morally wrong. The bottom line for him is that Buddhists do not behave like Christians, even if they are ill-treated, even in self-defense.

It is doubtful that Christians would have read *The Buddhist*, except perhaps to keep abreast of Buddhist activities in the island. Yet, English-speaking Buddhists, through publications such as *The Buddhist*, created an ideological community that accepted the superiority of Buddhism to Christianity, in part due to the former's peaceful missionary campaigns. An 1892 author compared a Buddhist king to a Christian emperor to make the point that the means that Buddhists have adopted for conversion are far superior to those of the Christians:

> While reading an account of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, we pause to compare or rather, to contrast the character of that "cruel and dissolute monarch" with that of Asoka, the first imperial convert to Buddhism. The methods employed by each for the extension of the faith which he embraced and took under his patronage may be said to be characteristic of the manner in which Buddhist and Christians have since worked for the promotion of the religions of their adoption.[12]

Whatever the reality of the situation of the two rulers, it is clear from these examples that the Enlightenment ideas of reason and freedom of religion (whether they were honored in Europe is another question entirely) frame the discourse of late-nineteenth-century, English-speaking Ceylonese Buddhists: Asoka's respect for religious freedom antedates Constantine's bloody campaigns; and though Constantine is a pre-Enlightenment figure, Christianity never conformed to the Enlightenment principles of religious freedom. As we noted in Chapter 1, Enlightenment ideas helped to reconstitute the relationship between religion and statecraft in Europe, thus setting in motion a cleavage between the two. In late-nineteenth-century Ceylon, at least amongst the literati, Enlightenment ideals

pervaded discourse on Buddhism and war, just as a review of *The Buddhist* suggests.

On the one hand, it is not surprising that *The Buddhist*, and other publications of its type, teems with Enlightenment concepts; after all, many of the most notable English-speaking Buddhists of the island, many of whom helped to establish the magazine, were educated in Britain, while others among them studied at the most elite local schools, the curriculum of which was suffused with European values. On the other hand, they argued that their Buddhism was more enlightened than the Enlightenment – an apt posture to assume, perhaps, given that they were Buddhists! Yet, we must not lose sight of the fact that, in their comparative analysis of the worth of Buddhism and Christianity, they honed a religion – Buddhism — and an identity – Sinhala — that was in dire need of protection from the onslaughts of allegedly corrupting forces, be they racial, religious, or otherwise. That new identity, to be sure, was sanctified by the *Mahavamsa*. Moreover, it constituted the push for self-determination, despite (or, perhaps, because of) the Christian-colonial context of late-nineteenth-century Ceylon.

Thus, as late-nineteenth-century Ceylonese chiseled and refined a Sinhala-Buddhist identity, and as they wrote of the pacific nature of Buddhism, a radically transformed ideology, of war and its justification, emerged. As Derrida and Levinas have proposed, it is often the case that "violence is not necessarily the exclusive characteristic of the other but rather, and perhaps even above all, a means through which the self, whether individual or collective, is constituted and maintained."[13] In other words, in drives for self-determination, often violence is not imposed – it does not happen to the actors – but rather comes to pass in the attempt to create boundaries between self and other, a point that Chandra de Silva and I attempted to make in our 1998 study of Buddhist fundamentalism. To be sure, as we have seen here and in Chapter 3, the ideology that began to emerge in the later decades of the nineteenth century foreshadowed a paradise, built on past narratives, particularly *vamsa* literature, that defined itself in opposition to violence. Yet the cultural construction of the identity of place – the island of Buddhism – defined in opposition to the violent nature of Christian Europe, paradoxically permitted violence in defense of that identity.

To illustrate further, it is instructive to note that an 1892 writer, who left the insignia "J" on an editorial in *The Buddhist*, bemoaned the lack of patriots, imagining what his or her Ceylon might have looked like if history had been different:

> The eighteenth century dawned upon a scene of national and moral wreck and ruin in Ceylon … The land of the old line of Sinha sovereign was reigning over the central part of the Island and before the century was over thirty years old, a Dravidian prince stepped on to the Aryan throne of Lanka. With Dravidian sovereignty came a long train of customs and habits and forms of worship which more or less undermined the characteristics of the Sinhalese, and supplanted the pure teachings and

> simple rites of Buddhism. Glory and prosperity departed from the beautiful shores of Lanka. There was no promise of Gemunu, a Parakrama or a Sinha rising once more to unfurl the flag of independence and crush the enemies that sapped the national vigour of the Sinhalese.[14]

In this glorification of a noble Buddhist past, where religion and ethnicity are fused, and where righteous, Buddhist kings, such as (Dutu)Gemunu, are victorious over forces inimical to Buddhism (this editorial might be read as a critique of the British, despite the retrospective on the Tamil, "the Dravidian"), the author laments that the Sinhalas had not resisted a foreign presence, strikingly contrary to Dharmapala's general thoughts on Buddhism and self-defense early in his career, at roughly the same time as J's editorial. In fact, J's 1892 editorial registers a movement observable in writings of the period: from the general (namely, Buddhism does not condone violence but Christianity does) to the particular (namely, the Sinhalas need a warlike (Dutu)Gemunu now), a shift that assigns violence to an external source (they conquered us, we should have resisted), thereby opening the door to violence as a defense.

We find this tendency in Dharmapala's writings, as well. Consider, for instance, another 1892 passage, penned by Dharmapala, that we studied in Chapter 3. In it, notwithstanding his simultaneous critique of violent Islam, Dharmapala stops just short of advocating real war with actual weapons against the colonial powers as he regretted the Sinhala people's misfortunes.[15] In Chapter 3, we saw that it might be useful to frame Dharmapala's complicated thoughts on war in the language of ethical theories, particularly ethical obligations. In Dharmapala's estimation, Buddhists in general have an obligation to be non-violent, but that obligation is not absolute. Rather, it can be compromised with good reason – namely, the defense of the island of the dharma, also considered an obligation of the Sinhala people. Dharmapala's ideas point to a moral universe in which certain ethical duties are not always binding, that is, in which duties are prima facie rather than absolute. All of which is another way of saying that, in regard to war, Dharmapala engaged in both deontological and utilitarian ethical thinking, depending on the context: Arguing in 1892 from a deontological perspective that the act of war is wrong, Dharmapala could claim the supremacy of Buddhism over Islam and Christianity. Nonetheless, in the same year, Dharmapala argued that the Sinhalas would have, and should have, defended themselves, from the violence of the Portuguese, if only his people had been equipped with the weapons to do so (and if only their karma would have allowed it), thereby permitting war in self-defense. In the latter case, by adopting a utilitarian perspective, Dharmapala focuses on the solution that might have been – autonomy for the island. Here, as is the case with many of the thinkers we shall meet in this chapter, in Buddhist Sri Lanka it is context that tends to determine ethical positions, particularly in matters pertaining to war.

But despite the rhetoric of (Ceylonese) Buddhism-in-decline that permeated late-nineteenth-century discourse such as J's and Dharmapala's, a straw man that has been the subject of numerous studies, Buddhism did not teeter on the brink of

destruction, nor did the Sinhala people risk annihilation. Indeed, as John Holt has recently pointed out, the South Indian Nayakkar dynasty (clearly alluded to in J's editorial) that succeeded the ethnically Sinhala kings in 1739, the last of whom neglected Buddhist affairs, successfully revived Buddhism, despite their Hindu orientation and, paradoxically, in the teeth of resistance from the Sinhala-Buddhist aristocracy.[16] Sinhala rhetoric of peace and accompanying identity politics in the late nineteenth century nonetheless presented a beleaguered group, caretakers of something very special (Buddhism), that warranted justified defensive postures. For, as we saw in Chapter 3 in our examination of *dharma yuddhaya*, spiritual and metaphorical language, once made concrete, allows for the call to meet one violence with another.[17] And while late-nineteenth-century Buddhists, such as Dharmapala, did not call for violence against their Christian colonizers, nor against the minorities of the island, they provided the rhetoric that would allow for what would be construed as defensive violence, and even war, if need be. In other words, they made it possible for their deontological arguments against war to be recast in terms of utilitarian arguments to permit war if certain conditions were met.

The complex rhetorical maneuver that allowed Buddhists to justify war, despite the assumption that war is morally problematic, entailed a reformulation of ethical theories and a demonization of the other (Muslim, Tamil, European) that we traced in the previous chapter's brief history of late-nineteenth-century cultural contact. In order to appreciate fully the degree to which Buddhist ethical orientations toward the other in the late-nineteenth-century Ceylon were shaped by various historical exigencies, it might be instructive here to return briefly to J's editorial, which we examined above. In it, two distinct ethnic groups emerge – namely, the Dravidian and the Aryan. The former are responsible for the moral degradation of the latter, whereas the Aryans are the legitimate claimants to the island. In this late-nineteenth-century example of Sinhala adoption of European notions of race, the self-referent "Aryan" symbolizes a superiority that places the Sinhala people on par with their British colonizers. And here we have yet another paradox: while presumably Sinhala writers, as we have seen, marked themselves off from the contemporary foreign presence by the limits of Sinhala pacific religion, they nonetheless embraced the racial theories that united the Sinhala Buddhist to the European Christian.

Sinhala writers often demonstrated anxiety over the conflation of Dravidian and Aryan, particularly because the Tamils were reckoned – by Sinhala and European – to be a Dravidian people. From the Sinhala perspective, however, not all colonized Ceylonese were alike: Sinhalas were not Tamils and vice versa. This anxiety is preserved in consternation over an 1894 English-language dictionary that included the Sinhalas among "the Dravidian family." A critic of this error, who reverses racial categories, betrays the degree to which *vamsa* literature resounded in late-nineteenth-century Ceylon: "The latest historical researches, based on the Mahavamsa recently translated, have conclusively shown that the Sinhalese are of the Aryan race and not the Dravidian."[18] Here, the "story" of the

Sinhala people is framed in terms of their continuity with the Aryan conquerors of the Buddhist island, despite the latter's violent tendencies, that is, notwithstanding the Christianity for which they had been demonized. Sinhala identification with political power, with the British, however, had its limits: the Sinhalas could boast in Buddhism a superior religion, a sentiment clearly expressed in an 1893 editorial on the Franco-Siamese war: "Alas, there remain in this age of war, in this age when profession of peace is diametrically opposed to practice, but a few independent Buddhist nations"[19] who teach that elusive peace. And hence another irony: the late-nineteenth-century construction of pacific Buddhism, combined with European racial categories and Buddhist notions of an idyllic past, helped to set the stage for the militant *dharma yuddhaya* ideology of the present. In other words, the construction of a pacific Buddhism, a fundamental aspect of which was the demonization of the other, permitted utilitarian orientations regarding real war – for defense of particular values – to eclipse the generally held presupposition that war is wrong.

In the field: ethical orientations and ethnic boundaries

In my field study, many of the Buddhists that I interviewed, even those who initially stated that Buddhism never allows war for any reason, framed their ideas about defense and the dharma with a type of utilitarianism. When I asked, "Can militant *dharma yuddhaya* be justified from the point of view of canonical Theravada Buddhism?," I was usually met with a resounding, "No." Of course, in asking the question, I did not, nor do I now, assume that textual Buddhism is "real" Buddhism, while lived Buddhism is "false."[20] Rather, as we saw in Chapter 2, contemporary Buddhists allude to canonical metaphors of war as they weigh the morality of war in contemporary Sri Lanka. Thus, they invite us to explore the texts. This is as true of Buddhists who advocate peace in all situations; they also refer to specific canonical theories, including "dependent-arising," to demonstrate the immorality of war in all cases, thereby underscoring the relationship between (textual) theoretical discussions and the practice of Buddhism.

During my field research, as I had expected, one of the Buddhist notions that was invoked to express the horrors of war was dependent-arising. I have argued elsewhere, as have countless other scholars, that the moral universe of the normative texts of Theravadin Buddhists is in part shaped by dependent-arising. Dependent-arising is the doctrine that all things exist in relation to, and are contingent upon, each other, a doctrine that itself is shaped by the idea of compassion.[21] Such a worldview requires compassion because such a world inheres in a pattern of relationships that is necessary for the smooth functioning of the social world. Moreover, compassion's related emotions of love and sympathy in Theravada Buddhism are so pervasive in the texts that one scholar devoted an entire monograph to them,[22] while other scholars have argued that in the Theravadin canonical texts, compassion, love, and sympathy are foundational in the Buddhist ethical world.[23] Given the over-riding concern that the canon has with these

emotions, is it possible for a textual worldview that demands compassion, loving kindness, and non-violence to allow for just-war thinking as well? In other words, as some of the Buddhists that I interviewed asked me, "How could war ever be deemed 'just' in a religion such as Buddhism, the very foundation of which is non-violence,[24] compassion, love, and sympathy?" Given the emphasis on non-violence in the canon, can we assume that canonical Buddhism requires pacifism as an absolute obligation?

In Chapter 2, we examined various canonical passages, suggested to me by my informants, that lend themselves to a just-war interpretation. Here, we must recall that, notwithstanding the militant strand that permeates contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhism, which, in part, is bolstered by canonical ambiguities regarding war, there is an abundance of prescriptions for non-violence, both in the practice of Buddhism and in the texts that Buddhists claim support their practice. This is so, primarily, because non-violence, without question, is an over-riding concern of the Pali canon, which suggests just how serious its abrogation is. Indeed, as is also well known, and worth repeating again, the Theravadin Buddhist Pali canon is replete with the Buddha's admonition to be compassionate and to practice loving kindness[25] – and to shun violence. The Buddha ("if we can use that as a shorthand for the authors of the early texts"[26]) counseled his monks in the *Kakapucama Sutta*, for instance, to practice love even toward enemies: "Even were someone to be carved up limb by limb with a double-handled saw, if he felt hate towards his attackers he would not be following my teaching,"[27] a Buddhist aphorism that was adduced by numerous of my informants, including even those, both monastic and lay, who allow for (defensive) war if certain conditions are met. According to a Sri Lankan essay on Buddhist pacifism, which first cites the passage from the *Kakapucama Sutta*:

> The high standard of *metta* [loving kindness] expected from a bhikkhu [monk] can be understood by the following … The Buddha himself has set the noble example (vide gatha [verse] no. 320 in the Dhammapada): "As an elephant in the battle-field withstanding arrows shot from a bow, ever so shall I endure abuse, for most people are ill-disciplined."[28]

Here, in this oft-quoted passage from the *Dhammapada*, a popular canonical text, it is a military metaphor (as we have come to expect) that supplies the context for admonitions about non-violence. The passage is cited in contemporary Sri Lanka as one that teaches that we have an ultimate obligation to pacifism, that pacifism is always binding, no matter the conditions.

Indeed, the idea that pacifism is an ultimate obligation in Buddhism is a commonly held assumption in the USA. During the many phases of this project, when I told friends and colleagues that I was writing a book on Buddhism and war, without fail the response was that there could be little, if anything, to write about, because Buddhists never allow war. Moreover, Sri Lankans, like others, resist even a discussion of war in the context of a discussion of the Buddha. For

instance, in the recorded minutes of the Sri Lankan Parliament, it is not at all unusual to read of debates that take place between the PA government and the UNP opposition on the nature of the war. Often the subject hinges on war and Buddhism. In a 1997 example, the Muslim Minister of Port Development, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, Mr M. H. M. Ashraff, chided the opposition party, the UNP, for having fought "a fake war." Ashraff then pointed out that "the constitution says that it is the duty of every citizen to foster and promote the dhamma of the Lord Buddha." To which, the Deputy Speaker of the House, Anil Moonesinghe, Ashraff's ally, nonetheless proclaimed in anger to his fellow parliamentarian, "I don't think it is proper to bring Lord Buddha into the debate."[29]

When discussing the themes of this book in Sri Lanka, even with Sinhala Buddhists who advocate defensive war to protect the dharma or the Sinhala nation, I evoked the same response as did Ashraff. In Sri Lanka, during my 1997 and 1998 visits to the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) in Colombo, for instance, I had very animated conversations about war with English-speaking Buddhists, all of whom told me countless times that Buddhism never permits war and that the subject, moreover, is an unsavory one. (Most of the YMBA members that I interviewed are retired civil servants who, in their leisure time, read in the library.) Many were so adamant about their position on war that they advised me to think of another subject to study.

Despite the resistance that I initially received to my questions, I soon found out that most of my regular conversation partners at the YMBA were well versed in Buddhism and its texts, both canonical and post-canonical, thereby providing me with more information than I could ever have dreamed possible. Karen McCarthy Brown's observation that "ethnographic research is, whatever else it is, a form of human relationship,"[30] rang true; I found that my own knowledge of Buddhism grew in relationships with Buddhists whom I had come to know in the course of my research. Yet, though I did not intend to become negatively stamped as a scholar, a Westerner, and thus Christian, and perhaps even "feminist," it was inevitable. I became used to, and came to expect, resistance to my questions. In part this was due to the common assumption in Buddhist Sri Lanka that Western and local Christians are pro-Tamil and pro-Eelam. To illustrate the consensus about the Christian and the LTTE, D. Karunadasa, a professor at the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, has argued (in print) that the so-called "peace initiatives" of the "Christian hierarchy in Sri Lanka … confirm the apprehensions of the Buddhists that the Christian churches are on the side of those who want to dismember this country and set up the state of Eelam,"[31] a Tamil homeland in the north of the island. Another editorial highlights the alleged relationship between the two forces that are considered to be inimical to Buddhism in stronger terms: "There is ample evidence to show that the Christian Church covertly or overtly encourages the LTTE terrorism and is a serious obstacle to ethnic peace."[32] Along these lines, in 1998 someone else argued that "Christianity is associated with war and aggressive behavior, while Buddhism is not."[33] Such sentiment must be considered in the context of the "*Mahavamsa* view" of Sri

Lankan history that has allowed Sinhalas to argue that there have been (and continue to be) demonic groups on the island that are opposed to all things Sinhala, including religion. Indeed, in another editorial that also appeared in print in 1998, one "Citizen D" argued that Sri Lankan peace initiatives are controlled by "foreign masters", that is, by Christians, and that "the 'peace' strategy [of the Kumaratunga government] is quite sinister and is well financed by the World Tamil Movement."[34] In his or her indictment against the Kumaratunga government's Sudu Nelum (White Lotus) "war for peace" movement (see Chapter 2), Citizen D reveals one facet of the rhetoric regarding Sri Lanka's contemporary war: the assumption that the Tamil separatist movement is supported and underwritten by Christians and Westerners, a subject I have explored more fully elsewhere.[35] Citizen D, moreover, betrays the degree to which some Sri Lankans are aware of at least one critique lodged by academics against Sinhala Buddhism when he or she writes, with obvious irony, that the Tamil desire for a homeland "is genuine and the hardline Sinhalese with the "Mahawamsa mentality" [sh]ould recognize this genuine aspiration of the Tamils and hand over the north and east if necessary."[36] All of this leads Citizen D to ask: "Are we going to stand up and fight for our country or do we want to 'peacefully' commit suicide?" I must eschew, at least for the moment, this allusion to the mythical king, Sangabo, who, tradition maintains, committed suicide rather than protect his country. Instead, here I should like to point out that Citizen D reveals a version of just-war thinking as he or she attempts to persuade Sri Lankan readers that they have a duty to fight for their country, particularly against those who seek to carve it up into two separate states, enemies who include foreign and Christian powers.

Thus, given the standard sorts of connections that are made between the "West" and the LTTE, I was not surprised that the YMBA members were suspicious of me, a presumably Christian scholar from the West. Nor was I surprised that they prefaced their remarks with a comment or two about how natural it is for a "girl" (the use of which was intended to undercut my authority and thus my conclusions about Sri Lankan Buddhism) like me (Christian/Western) to assume, based on the "violent" history of Christianity, that Buddhism too must be rife with a history of holy wars. Often reiterating that Buddhism is pacifist while Christianity is violent, a variation of a view that goes back to at least the late nineteenth century, as we have seen, the members of the YMBA who spoke with me drafted their discussions in a retrospective of Christianity and its wars. In addition, it was usual for the YMBA members to attempt to protect Buddhism and its pacifism from the scrutiny of a scholar who has Sri Lankan roots (and who is now resident in the West), particularly because of the controversy over Tambiah's *Buddhism Betrayed?*, another study of Sinhala Buddhism by an expatriate Sri Lankan (see Chapter 1). I must confess that I relished being compared to Tambiah, one of the most important scholars that Sri Lanka has produced. Yet, I was repeatedly frustrated by his influence on my "informants," who often times responded directly to my questions about Buddhism and war with a short dissertation on the "problems" in Tambiah's book, not the least of which was the issue of Tambiah's authority as a Christian

Tamil to write on Sinhala Buddhism. In other words, my questions about Buddhism and war were met regularly with answers that exposed the degree to which contemporary English-speaking Sri Lankan Buddhists, as well as Sinhala speakers, for that matter, continue to hone their identity in contradistinction to Christianity (and the West), on the one hand, and to reconcile their stridently defensive posture with their pacific faith, on the other. Indeed, I was often left to wonder how different my study of Buddhism and war might have been had it not been for the legacies of Tambiah's book, which demonstrably had influenced the opinions of English-speaking Buddhists on the subject of war, and my own "position" in Sri Lankan society. Tambiah's work has also influenced Sinhala speakers: all of the Sinhala-speaking monks that I interviewed referred to Tambiah's book and formulated their answers in response to it, while others, including the Venerable Sobitha, whom we met in Chapter 2, refused to grant me an interview, ostensibly because he himself had been interviewed by Tambiah and had not been happy with the outcome![37]

There were, of course, more than a few moments during my field study, when I found that I had to moderate my questions about war and Buddhism, in order to relieve a discomforting situation. And I shall review a few of them here, not for their own sake, but rather because they represent the ways in which Sinhala Buddhists defend their religion from perceived threats and thus reveal aspects of Buddhist just-war thinking. One of the most memorable interviews I had was with Professor Abaya Aryasinghe, the editor of *The Heritage*, a bilingual magazine, published every two months (with a very limited circulation of 1,000), that records the fortunes (and misfortunes) of the Sinhala-Buddhist people. Professor Aryasinghe received an MA in Archeology from the University of Peradeniya and his PhD in Linguistics from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Thus, I was not surprised to find that he contextualized his discussion on Buddhism and war with evidence from archeology and texts.

When I arrived at his house, after losing my way for over an hour in a trishaw, the driver of which kept assuring me that he knew exactly where we were heading, I was shown unparalleled hospitality. Mrs Aryasinghe, who had been expecting me, had prepared all sorts of wonderful Sri Lankan snacks, along with a welcome cup of tea. Together Professor and Mrs Aryasinghe regaled me with memories of relationships they had developed with other Burghers, or Sri Lankans of some sort of European extraction, an effort doubtless intended to make me feel comfortable. Yet it was difficult to pretend that I was untroubled by Professor Aryasinghe's resort both to archaeological "evidence" and to the *Mahavamsa* as he asserted his claim that the destiny of Sri Lanka, which he called "Sinhaladwipa" (island of the lion), was to be a nation of Sinhalas. According to Professor Aryasinghe's reading of Sri Lankan history, the island's connections to the Sinhala people reach far into the past, from its earliest period of human habitation. Dutugemunu, I was informed, drove away the "Tamil," Elara, who had ruled illegitimately for forty years, thereby unifying, for the first time in the island's history, the entire island under one legitimate Sinhala-Buddhist ruler. In my open-

ended discussion with Professor Aryasinghe, I came to recognize that Dutugemunu represents the hope that Sri Lanka once again may be victorious over "foreign" elements. In Professor Aryasinghe's view, contemporary foreigners, including Tamils, Muslims, and Burghers, are not to be killed, as was the case with the foreign presence during Dutugemunu's war against Elara. Rather, they should assimilate; they should learn Sinhala, speak Sinhala, and become Buddhist (and, thus, eliminated through conversion). I could not help but reflect upon my own family's reasons for leaving Sri Lanka in 1959, a time in which, as we have seen, Sinhala-Buddhist identity marked off the legitimate Ceylonese from the "foreigner." With a warm smile, Professor Aryasinghe told me that my parents' decision to emigrate from Sri Lanka was wise.

In our conversation, Professor Aryasinghe did not advocate the use of violence against the non-Sinhala people of Sri Lanka. Yet, he warned that, inasmuch as the island's present government was established by the vote, any band of people – such as the LTTE – that uses weapons to try to oust the government, or to break away, must be identified as "rebellious." Moreover, rebellions must be quashed, "even with weapons," a position that obviously is endorsed within and without Sri Lanka. Yet, Professor Aryasinghe's comments had a particularly Sinhala-Buddhist character: though I did not ask him about texts, he framed his ideas with Buddhist stories, both from the Pali canon and from the *vamsas*:

> Buddha has never prohibited war or fighting. He didn't encourage war and he didn't say "don't do it" also. Some kings even came to him for advice about war. … Dutugemunu was a Buddhist and also a warrior. So was Asoka.[38]

Professor Aryasinghe's thoughts prepared me for my interview with the Venerable Athuraliya Rathana, a Buddhist monk whom we have already met, who is the Secretary of the National Sangha Council, established in 1996, one purpose of which is to "ensure that Sri Lanka is not enslaved."[39] The venerable monk explained to me that the *sutras* teach that there is a limit to patience, and that even the Buddha used force for the benefit of others. Moreover, in his line of thinking, "all religions have offensive [war] theory (*akrama naya*)." But Buddhism has the "*mahajana* idea," or "people" theory: "In Dutugemunu's war, it was the people, with monks leading, along with women and children, that were ultimately victorious against Elara's weapons." "In defensive wars [*arakshaka yuddhaya*], the only type permitted in Buddhism," the Venerable Athuraliya continued, "if you accept defeat, we won't kill you. The *Mahavamsa* teaches that Sinhala Buddhists show compassion in the completion of war."

Professor Aryasinghe, like the venerable monk, was adamant that Sri Lankan Buddhist history is replete with stories of pious kings and monks who have endorsed the protection of the island of the Sinhalas, and of the dharma, through war. For the monk: "Buddhism and the Sinhalas are so mixed up that to protect one is to protect the other." Professor Aryasinghe's ideas were similar, but he

made the point that war is only a viable alternative when there is no alternative but to fight, by which expression he evoked "last resort," a criterion of Buddhist just-war thinking, as we saw in Chapter 2. And in the present context of Sri Lanka's Tamil rebellion, Professor Aryasinghe noted, the Sinhala-Buddhist government must fight, it is their duty: "sometimes it is necessary to sacrifice lives in order to save the country and the *sasana*."

In addition to being the editor of *The Heritage*, Professor Aryasinghe is the General Secretary of the Sinhala Maha Sammata Bhumiputra Pakshaya (the Sinhala Universal Approved Sons of the Soil Party), a 10,000-member political party that espouses a type of "Sinhala-Buddhist only" ideology which, according to Aryasinghe, is a smaller version of the Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of India. It will be recalled from our discussion in Chapter 3 that *bhumiputra* is a powerful expression and ideology in contemporary Sri Lanka. Here, the *bhumiputra* ideology, as a central component of the political party, marks off authentic Sri Lankans from the illegitimate. Which is why, Professor Aryasinghe explained, "the party is not ready to accept Tamil members."

As is well known, the BJP endorses a vision of a "Hindu-only" India, thereby sending a strong message to India's religious minorities. In Aryasinghe's political party, Buddhist monks contest seats on provincial councils, including Polonnaruwa and Gampaha, thus providing religious legitimation for the exclusive program of the Sinhala Maha Sammata Bhumiputra Pakshaya. Professor Aryasinghe was quick to point out that each meeting of the party begins with the recitation of the Buddhist five precepts, which further underscores its Buddhist orientation.

When it came time for me to part company with the Aryasinghes, Mrs Aryasinghe, who had already arranged for my transportation back to Colombo, gave me some snacks to take home. Kindness suffused the whole of my visit with the Aryasinghes. The moderate tone of Professor Aryasinghe's presentation of the facts of Sri Lankan history, however, did not prevent me from realizing that Professor Aryasinghe's views are an instantiation of the thesis of this study – namely, that Sinhala Buddhism, in its rich repertoire of stories – of the canon and the *vamsas* – underwrites war when the Sinhala people, who have legitimate "rights" to the island, or their religion, are perceived to be in peril.

Though the political party with which Professor Aryasinghe is affiliated, as well as the magazine that he publishes, are insignificant in terms of membership and readership, the views espoused by both the party and the magazine are nonetheless widely held, particularly in the *sangha*. One of the most influential monks in Sri Lanka, for instance, the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha, the chief prelate of the Amarapura Nikaya, responded to a question from me about Buddhism and war thus:

> though the Buddha's first sermon advised us to transcend the things of this world and to be non-violent, the Buddha said that "everyone is not righteous." Dutugemunu was a righteous Buddhist, but he had to fight.

> Can you imagine what our predicament would have been like if Dutugemunu had not protected our country? Sri Lanka is a Sinhala-Buddhist country.

In other words, the venerable monk apprehended Dutugemunu's project to have been one of ridding the island of unwelcome foreigners, whose presence threatened Buddhism. Yet, Madihe Pannasiha, at least in my interview with him, did not push the agenda of assimilation that Professor Aryasinghe endorsed. Rather, the venerable monk expressed the opinion that the island's minorities have the right to exist as distinct minorities (though he did concede that such a state of tolerance is contingent opon the minorities' acceptance of an inferior position),[40] but that the entire country is nevertheless the Sinhala-Buddhist homeland. His ideas about Jaffna, the "homeland" claimed by the Tamils, suggests as much:

> You know, it is only now that Jaffna is dominated by Tamils. There were twenty-one [Buddhist] temples in Jaffna, which proves that Buddhism flourished there. All those temples have been destroyed.[41]

In Chapter 5, I shall explore further the Sinhala-Buddhist ideological colonization of Jaffna, in order to determine the extent to which the entire island of Sri Lanka functions as a relic of the Buddha. Here it is important to note that, in the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha's opinion, Dutugemunu's war against the foreign presence, legitimized by the *sangha*, allowed for the entire island to be marked off as sacred Buddhist space. In looking to the canon and the *Mahavamsa* to authorize his own ethical orientation to war, the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha participates in a Sinhala-Buddhist rhetorical strategy that assumes that Buddhist narratives provide answers to ethical quandaries and that they permit war as a defense of the dharma.

The Venerable Madihe Pannasiha, moreover, assumed that, because I am resident in the West and presumably Christian, I was therefore predisposed to believe that all religions are inherently violent and endorse war. He was adamant that Buddhism does not have anything like a just-war tradition along the lines of the Christian West. Yet, at the same time, he offered some impressions of Dutugemunu's campaigns that lend themselves to a just-war interpretation:

> Dutugemunu was a devout Buddhist. And he had to protect his country and his religion. On his way to the north, he stopped at every temple to worship, listened to *bana* [preaching from monks], and repaired broken temples [that, is, he engaged in merit-making activities]. On his way to battle, he came across a beautiful temple whose monks were all very old and decrepit. When he inquired as to why such a sacred temple had only old monks, they told him that all the younger ones had gathered in the field to join him [Dutugemunu] in his war to protect the *sasana*!

Despite his protests that there is no such thing as just war in Buddhism, with a twinkle in his eye and a friendly grin, the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha listed many of the criteria of just-war thinking that we isolated in Chapter 2: just cause – the protection of the dharma – as well as right authority and right intention. All of these issues shaped his retelling of the well-known story of Dutugemunu. He also added that the enlightened beings' words of consolation to Dutugemunu after the war shows us that the pious Buddhist king was remorseful, another criterion of just-war thinking, as we have seen.

In my interviews, as is suggested by my conversation with both Professor Aryasinghe and the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha, laity and monks contextualized their views on war while directly engaging what they perceived to be my ethnicity and religion, the latter of which they construed as being prone to violence. Deciphering their ethical orientations about war, therefore, required excavating many layers of ideology, not the least of which was the widely held opinion that Western scholarship has misrepresented Sinhala Buddhism. My questions, and my very study, aroused a good deal of resistance, one benefit of which was the abundance of relevant material that was brought to my attention, unsurprisingly in view of the fact that many of my long discussions at the YMBA and elsewhere were with Buddhists who possessed an impressive knowledge of Christian and Buddhist texts and history. I was often directed to canonical passages which support the supposition that Buddhism cannot allow war for any reason. Frequently these lessons were punctuated with phrases such as, "you see, child, our religion [unlike Christianity] truly is pacifist." The most obvious evidence for this non-violent ethical orientation, according to my YMBA conversation partners, is the *Dhammapada*, particularly the metaphor of the embattled elephant.

To illustrate the *Dhammapada* point further, the YMBA members often turned my attention toward an important canonical discourse, in which the Buddha teaches a monk that he should cultivate a loving, instead of an angry, mind. The Buddha counsels him and the other monks that they should cultivate a loving mind not only in the face of criticism, but also when wishing to criticize others. The Buddha explains proper training of the mind thus:

> May our minds not become perverted. We will not utter evil speech. We will continue to have sympathy for the welfare [of others]. We will have loving minds and be free from anger. We will continue to relate to that individual with love in our minds. We will continue to relate to the entire world with minds endowed with love – that are untroubled, free from enmity, vast, enlarged and measureless.[42]

Again, my YMBA informants quoted this passage almost as frequently as they cited the *Dhammapada* and the *Kakacupama Sutta* in order to underscore how Buddhist pacifism is based on the principle that violence is wrong. Such (canonical) advice, moreover, according to my informants, does not extend solely to monks. Regarding the laity, my YMBA informants related, as did others, that the Buddha

taught that all Buddhists, regardless of caste and other differences, should cultivate a loving mind.[43] This admonition is repeated throughout the texts. For instance, the *Brahma Gala Sutta* describes the Buddha as one who has shunned violence:

> Putting away the killing of living things, Gotama the recluse holds aloof from the destruction of life. He has laid the cudgel and the sword aside and ashamed of roughness and full of mercy, he dwells compassionate and kind to all creatures that have life.[44]

By virtue of his own virtuous example, the Buddha teaches people to be compassionate rather than violent.

Sri Lankan Buddhist ethics and war

As is clear, then, in addition to other ethical notions, Sri Lankan Buddhists engage virtue ethics, in which "morality is viewed principally as the expression of a person's virtuous character, rather than as action in accordance with principles and rules."[45] To illustrate further, a 1998 record of a Buddhist monk's attitude toward war demonstrates the special place of the Buddha's virtues as Sinhala Buddhists negotiate the war in Sri Lanka: " 'Lord Buddha rejected war and wished to have peace. As followers of Buddha we cannot encourage war but help to establish peace in the country [based on the Buddha's own actions]," stated the General Secretary of the Ruhuna Bhikkhu Peramuna Ven. Meegoda Kalanitissa Thera."[46] At an event jointly sponsored by the Sudu Nelum movement (see Chapter 2) and the Ethnic Affairs and National Integration Ministry, the Venerable Kalanatissa linked the Buddha's virtues to right action. Given that the Sudu Nelum movement is sponsored by the government to promote its "war for peace" (as we also saw in Chapter 2), the monk doubtless advocated that Sri Lankans, like the Buddha, should reject war, but that war, given the present situation, is a necessary last resort and regrettable.

The virtues of the Buddha, "The Lord of Peace," were also the theme of a 1940 essay,[47] written by a monk, on the Buddha's intervention in war among the Koliyas and Sakiyas over the ownership of water, a story of the *Mahavamsa* that was cited by countless Buddhists that I had interviewed during the course of my field studies. In the essay, the monk underscores the Buddha's fidelity to pacifism and his high moral character that disallowed him from promoting war.

The special role of virtues in Sinhala-Buddhist ethical thinking is also found in allusions to a mythical king of Sri Lanka. In a 1939 meditation on war, one writer linked the Buddha's virtues to King Sri Sangabo and to sacrifice for country: "The Great One [the Buddha] renounced a kingdom and a throne, wife and child, and all world comforts, and wandered as a beggar to serve those that suffer … This was the spirit that pervaded ancient Lanka, and it was this spirit that King Sri Sangabo, of ancient lore, gave his head and died himself to save the lives of his countrymen."[48] It is of interest to note here that, while King Sri Sangabo's virtues

have been paradigmatic for some Buddhists who urge patriotism and pacifism, other Buddhists have considered Sangabo's story to be a teaching about the non-virtuous life: J. R. Jayewardene, former president of Sri Lanka, in fact, commented that he could not watch idly – in the manner of the mythical king who acted from a sense of justice but, nevertheless, brought his kingdom to ruin because he refused to defend himself – as his country imploded as a result of the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) insurrection (see Chapter 2). And another Sri Lankan, a layman, E. M. G. Edirisinghe, argued in 1998 that Sangabo's actions regrettably have led some Buddhists to believe that suicide is laudable, a problem in a country that has the highest suicide rate in the world.[49] Edirisinghe, moreover, who viewed Sangabo through the lens of virtue ethics, framed his opinions on suicide with a type of deontological ethical thinking as he categorically stated that, based on the Buddhist duty of non-violence: "Buddhism never condones war, holy or unholy, defensive or offensive, freedom or revolutionary, which involves slaughter. So in the case of Buddhism the religion has denied its adherents both suicide and slaughter under any pretext."[50] For Edirisinghe, whose morality, at least when it comes to violence, is constructed by both virtue ethics (revealed in his discussion of Sangabo) and deontology, Buddhism demands an ultimate obligation of pacifism, rather than a prima facie duty of non-violence.

Notwithstanding the disagreement over the paradigmatic life of King Sangabo, many of the Buddhists that I interviewed during my field studies theorized that the Buddha's behavior provides an important teaching on ethics. In other words, in their discussions of the Buddha's and Sangabo's lives, they made judgments about the moral worth of agents. For Sri Lankan Buddhists, both for those who advance pacifism as an absolute obligation and for those whose world is inflected by prima facie duties, the Buddha's was the paradigmatic moral life, which combined well-formed virtues without motivation by rules or obligations. In other words, the Buddhists that invoked the Buddha's actions as teachings on the ethical life defined moral virtue in the same way as Western-trained ethicists – namely, "as a disposition to act or a habit of acting in accordance with moral obligations and ideals."[51] And like Beauchamp and Childress, who critique virtue ethics that are devoid of a discussion of the agent's motivational structure,[52] the Buddhists that I interviewed, at least those who view morality by a person's virtuous character, scrutinized intentions above all.

As Richard Gombrich has amply demonstrated, the Buddha "ethicised the universe" in his redefinition of karma as intention. (Gombrich goes so far as to say that he does not see "how one could exaggerate the importance of the Buddha's ethicisation of the world," which he regards "as a turning point in the history of civilisation."[53]) As is well known, the Buddhist idea of karma, that is, intentional activity, is fundamental to Buddhist morality. In the Buddhist texts, as my informants often pointed out, it is not action that is subject to moral scrutiny, but rather volition.

To explicate the point about karma and intentions, consider the following

passages from *The Buddhist*, the first of which is an excerpt from a 1986 issue; the second was penned in 1896, nearly one hundred years earlier:

> No one has the right to take away the life of any other living being. It is selfish; it is immoral; it is sinful. … There are five factors which constitute the immoral act of killing.[54]

> Now to constitute the demerit of killing according to Buddhism, five things are necessary, namely: (1) That there must be a living being or one endowed with Jivitendriya. (2) The consciousness of its having life of Jivitendriya. (3) Having the mind or desire to kill it or sever its life. (4) Devising means by which to take away that life. (5) By any such means taking away that life either immediately or afterwards.[55]

These two passages make clear that late-nineteenth-century Buddhists, as well as their present-day cohort, have been well aware of the Buddhist doctrines that make the case that "a course of action is explained with reference to an action's being performed with full intention and with full awareness of what one is doing."[56] As the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, the Venerable Hammalawa Saddhatissa has argued in a recent volume on Buddhist ethics, "in the absence of any one of these [five] conditions, the act would not constitute killing even though death should follow; the event would be considered an accident and would not entail any evil effect for the performer of the act."[57] In other words, as we noted in Chapter 2 in our examination of the *Mahavamsa's arahants'* counsel to Dutugemunu after he had killed *damilas* in defense of dharma, there would be no karmic repercussions. Presumably drawing upon the commentaries to the Pali canon, including the *Atthasalini* and the *Papancasudani*,[58] the 1893 and 1986 contributors to *The Buddhist* made the case that the act of killing is complicated and its ethicization is predicated upon intent.

The sentiment of both the 1893 and the 1986 expositions on Buddhist ethics was expressed in an interview with the Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera. When I asked him to relate his views on Buddhist ethics related to war, specifically, and killing, more generally, he presented the idea that Buddhist ethics are inextricably related to one's intentions:

> There are five factors that have to be completed in order to make the act of killing a sin [*pap*]: the intention to kill, making plans to kill, and ultimately taking a life according to a plan. In most defensive postures, these five factors are not fulfilled. For instance, if a snake were about to attack you, the immediate reaction would be to feel afraid and then to kill the animal. It is not regarded as an intentional killing. Therefore it is not considered a sin. Killing in war is the same thing; it is not intentional killing but rather defense.

According to the Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera, killing to defend the country or the *sasana*, therefore, brings few negative karmic repercussions, because the intention is to save, rather than to harm. In fact, this is the message that he preaches to the soldiers whom he counsels:

> My responsibility is to boost the morale of the soldiers. None of the other religious representatives [Hindu, Christian, Muslim] ever visit the camps. I console them by reminding them of all the good deeds they have done in their life. Quelling the terrorists in the north is solely to protect the people of the country. Soldiers have to risk their lives to protect and safeguard the dharma. The soldiers in the army are courageous; they have become selfless. Therefore, it is possible even to attain *nibbana*, even for those fighting for the country and *sasana*.[59]

Here, in this line of thinking, where intent is the determining ethical criterion, the Buddhist precept of non-violence can be abrogated in defensive postures that may require killing, but that do not impede one's spiritual development.[60] Here, moreover, the end justifies the means, insofar as the preservation of the dharma and the integrity of the nation of Sri Lanka are calculated as desired consequences, despite the inevitability of loss of human life.

The important Buddhist moral notion of intention took on new meaning in an interview that I had with the Venerable Bellanwila Wimalaratana, who is fluent in English. By the time I met the Venerable Wimalaratana, I had come to expect that he, like the other Buddhists I had interviewed, whether they spoke English or not, would immediately seize upon the words "war" and "Buddhism" in my initial question and quickly point out the uncomfortable juxtaposition, indeed, the assumed oxymoronic nature, of the pairing. The venerable monk was no exception. As soon as I began discussing my project, he said that there is no such thing as justified war in Buddhism. And like my friends at the YMBA, the monk implied that my interest in war is only natural, given that my religion (though I never discussed it with him) allows for violence in the name of Christianity. Yet, when I pressed him on the issue of "just" war, explaining that holy war is one thing, and just war quite another (we shall return to this distinction in Chapter 5), he told me that the defense of Sri Lanka is justified. Venerable Wimalaratana volunteered that the Dutugemunu–Elara conflict of the *Mahavamsa* demonstrates that good politicians (in this case, Dutugemunu), "get people behind them by means of religion." In other words, religion mobilizes people, as is demonstrated in the *Mahavamsa* as well as in contemporary Sri Lanka. He warned, however, that monks who use the saga to help us understand the war in Sri Lanka should learn that we cannot judge today's problems by what happened during Dutugemunu's reign. The Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera, however, drew a direct line from the ancient story of the *vamsas* to contemporary politics and its relationship to the *sangha*:

> It is a well-known fact that the Buddhist monks of this country are more politically involved than in other Buddhist nations. The reason is that the monks have to safeguard the country, its beings, and the era itself (*rata*, *deya*, *samaya*). That is why they are referred to as the "guardians of the race" (*jatiye muradevatvo*). Therefore, the involvement of the *arahants* in Dutugemunu's war, for defensive purposes, is quite acceptable. Theraputabhaya, initially a Buddhist monk, left the order to join the army as one of King Dutugemunu's great warriors. The condition [under which he disrobed] was that he be allowed to re-join the order once the war was over. Not only did he rejoin, but he is also said to have become an *arahant*.

In this justification for the *sangha's* participation in the political process, ancient monks are aligned with war, a contemporary dilemma.

The Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera, along the lines of Professor Aryasinghe, argued that the contemporary Sri Lankan conflict is a rebellion rather than a war, which, he implied, is being underwritten by foreigners. As such, it must be quashed. His views about the origin of the conflict and its nature are different from those of the Venerable Wimalaratana, who related that the conflict is economic in nature, with roots in the British period, when the Tamil peoples of the north and the east of the island were deprived. "The Tamils have real grievances," the monk proclaimed. At the same time, the Venerable Wimalaratana was quick to point out that terrorists must be defeated, and that the leading monks' recent controversial letter to the government, regarding the defeat of the terrorists and the monks' request to "finish the war," was justified.[61] When I asked him if there is a contradiction between being a Buddhist monk and advising the government to continue their war, he emphatically asserted, with a playful smile, that there is not: "We leave it up to the government to determine the best means of defeat." He nuanced his line of thinking by relating a "joke," as he called it, with a well-articulated moral about intentions and outcomes, that is told by Buddhist monks:

> A mouse appears repeatedly in a Buddhist monastery. Each morning, a monk asks the boy [i.e. servant] to remove the mouse, but the mouse returns each night, only to appear the next morning. This happens for some time and the mouse keeps returning and making mischief. Finally the monk says: "Remove the mouse and see to it that it does not return!" In the same way, we can't advise killing, but we can advise the government to get rid of terrorists, to end the war.

In other words, from the Venerable Wimalaratana's view, monks need not, indeed should not, counsel the government about the means of ending the war, but only the outcome, a position that was also stated by the Venerable Madihe

Pannasiha, whom we met above, in an interview I had with him a year earlier. He maintained that, though "Buddhism is essentially a non-violent religion, it is the duty of the leader to protect the country. We can't tell the president to go to war, but we can tell her to *protect* [at this point, his eyes lit up and he began to laugh] the country."[62]

It can be argued that both the Venerable Wimalaratana and the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha employed a type of utilitarianism that, in the West, is most commonly associated with John Stuart Mill. Robert Audi summarizes Mill's ethical orientation by proposing that "utilitarianism would have us classify as wrong, and in that sense objectively unjustified, an act with far worse consequences than its alternative, even when the agent has excellent reason to think that the act will optimize happiness."[63] The teaching of the Venerable Wimalaratana's joke is consonant with utilitarianism, insofar as the good achieved for the benefit of the many (the monks in the monastery) outweighs the consequences of allowing the mouse to continue to raid the kitchen and disrupt life in the monastic setting. In other words, in the Buddhist "joke," as well as in other ethical quandaries, as we have seen, utilitarianism is concerned with goals and outcomes. Thus, in the venerable monk's style of ethical thinking, Buddhist monks can ask the government to eradicate terrorism, to "finish the war." To "finish the war," of course, is shorthand for killing off the LTTE. But, war is justified, in the monk's opinion, for the good of the many, both Sinhala and Tamil, because the moral value of war is weighed by its consequences, that is, by peace, the desired condition. In a manipulation of utilitarian thinking to provide harmony between his advice and Buddhist doctrine, the Venerable Wimalaratana can argue that, in the joke, the intention is not to kill but rather to make peace in the monastery. The same is true for the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha, who focuses on the outcome – namely, peace. Along these lines, for the Venerable Wimalaratana, then, the senior monks' collective intention – in asking the government to finish the war – is not to kill but rather to usher in peace. Naturally, not all Buddhist Sri Lankans accept the idea that killing (Tamils) in order to save (Sinhalas) is an acceptable Buddhist ethical activity. Nonetheless, the venerable monk's thinking suggests that, as Buddhists in Sri Lanka have been forced to confront the very real problem of war, a type of Buddhist utilitarianism, with its emphasis on real consequences, infuses Sinhala-Buddhist morality. This is despite the marked absence of utilitarian ethical principles in published discussions on war prior to the advent of the beginnings of actual physical conflict between Sinhalas and Tamils in the 1950s.

Notwithstanding the popularity of types of utilitarian thinking in the later decades of the twentieth century, which, as we have seen, can at least in part be attributed to the prevailing condition of war in Sri Lanka, deontologists, too, contribute to the Sri Lankan discussion on war, as we noted from our study of the Kalutara mother's poem with which we began this chapter. Other deontological thinkers contribute to the current discussion on war in Sri Lanka, often arriving at entirely different conclusions from our Kalutara mother. For instance, in an essay written by a layman, Godfrey Gunasekera, that appeared in the 1998 Vesak

commemorative issue of *The Buddhist*, rules and duties come to the fore as he seeks to understand the Buddha's position on the warfare; contrary to our poet, who argues that the act of war is wrong, Gunasekera resolves that the duty to protect a country, which might entail killing, does not necessarily compromise the Buddhist duty to non-violence. In the Vesak issue in which Gunasekera's article appeared, eminent scholars and monks tackle all sorts of subjects, including meditation, karma, and pilgrimage.[64] The theme of war of Gunasekera's essay, "The Buddha's Advice to a Soldier,"[65] then, is one topic amongst many that is covered by notable Buddhists in a special issue that commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death (Vesak) of the Buddha. Gunasekera begins his essay with a quote from the canon: "You can be a soldier of truth, but not be the aggressor." That statement, presumably attributed to the Buddha – striking for its war metaphor that explicates a position of peace – is followed by a question, posed by Gunasekera, which refers to a fundamental Buddhist ethic, abstention from killing:

> Can a follower of the Buddha Dhamma enlist in a military unit and go to the fighting front armed with all the essential weaponry and comply with orders and commands to prosecute the war when his conscience will prompt him that he might be violating the FIRST PRECEPT – "I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking life." This question came up during the Buddha's lifetime.[66]

Gunasekera's formula for understanding the ethical life presumes that there is a Buddhist rule or duty that might prohibit a Buddhist from being a soldier. Gunasekera gets to the heart of the matter when he asks, quoting a canonical figure, Sinha, a general of the king's army: "Does the Buddha maintain that all strife, including warfare for a righteous cause should be forbidden?"[67] In the context of Sri Lanka's war, it seems reasonable to assume that Gunasekera has reason to believe that Sinhala soldiers might find themselves in a similar quandary regarding the justice of their war.

From Gunasekera's point of view, the Buddha's response, "he who deserves punishment must be punished by due process of the law,"[68] is not contradictory. Gunasekera nuances the canonical injunction by explaining that the Buddha allowed that aggressors in war, as well as criminals, suffer not through ill will of another, but rather through their own evil action. In this line of thinking, the judge, or the warrior, as the case may be, bears none of the responsibility for the punishment of another. It is of interest to note here that Gunasekera's proof text is not the *Gamani Samyuttam*,[69] which Lambert Schmithausen argues categorically denounces war,[70] but rather the *Sinha Sutta*. According to Schmithausen's proof text, when a soldier asked the Buddha whether he, the soldier, would be reborn in a heaven after a death, the Buddha reluctantly told him that, in fact, the soldier would wind up in an unpleasant purgatory due to the "perverse" desire to cause harm or death to another.[71] Crestfallen, the soldier "takes refuge" in the Buddha.

For Schmithausen, the *Gamani Samyuttam* is evidence that early Buddhists condemned war and held that a soldier's karmic biography – which inextricably is linked to so-called perverse desires – destined him for an unpleasant rebirth. While Schmithausen's reading is certainly plausible, the fact remains that the textual Buddha's reluctance to answer the soldier's question can be read as an indication that, despite textual Buddhism's message of non-violence, it nevertheless allowed that not all people would embrace non-violence, and that war, therefore, is an inevitable feature of life, as are soldiers.

Gunasekera, however, much like my monastic informants, as we saw in Chapter 2, does not take up the *Gamani Samyuttam*. Rather, he continues his meditation on war by reciting another passage (presumably) from the *Anguttara Nikaya*, in which the Buddha ostensibly discusses just cause: "If a person goes to battle even for a righteous cause, then Sinha, he must be prepared to be slain by enemies because death is the destiny of warriors." But, as we might expect, the exhortation is followed by a teaching that winners will surely be losers: "But if he [the warrior] were victorious his success would be deemed great, but no matter how great it is, the wheel of fortune may turn again and reduce his life to the dust." This passage, which recalls the teaching of the Buddha to King Pasenadi that we studied in Chapter 2, underscores another Buddhist teaching on ethics: notwithstanding just cause, desire – for winning wars or anything else – is the root of suffering.[72]

Gunasekera proceeds with his meditation on war and Buddhism by relating karma to self-defense and to willful killing:

> the karmic effect of such an act [self-protection in combat] would be dependent on the mental attitude of the doer. For example: if, during the struggle to protect himself, a person happens to kill his assailant, though he had no intention at all to kill, then he would not be morally responsible for that act. On the other hand, if he killed the adversary with the vile intention to kill under any circumstances, then certainly he is not free from adverse karmic reaction.[73]

In other words, Gunasekera's ideas on war are framed by the Buddhist theory of karma, on the one hand, and a type of deontological thinking, on the other, in which a principle – justice – animates a war hero's story in the Pali canon. Indeed, Gunasekera's thinking suggests that his approach is pluralistic, that is, that he takes into account both karma and justice.

While Gunasekera thus permits killing in certain contexts, including corporal punishment, as we have seen, other Sri Lankan Buddhists have warned against implementing a death penalty, regarding it as un-Buddhist. For instance, a late-nineteenth-century, anonymous contributor to *The Buddhist* engaged a type of deontology to condemn the act of killing as a punitive measure:

> Respect for life cannot be encouraged by taking life. Moreover, the ends of justice are often defeated from the peculiar nature of the problem

> placed for solution before a jury. There is no middle course; the prisoner must be pronounced guilty or acquitted, and we are often surprised how a conscientious Buddhist jury could reconcile it with themselves and with their religion to award the punishment of death upon a criminal. … even among the most uneducated, venomous snakes are not killed but are either carefully deposited in a jungle or floated down a river in a basket.[74]

In an appeal in which the character of Buddhists is also examined, thus reflecting virtue ethics as well, the writer tests the universality of (what she or he considers to be) the single basic principle of Buddhism, that is, respect for life, within the context of a discussion of jurisprudence. In short, Gunasekera's discussion of war and the anonymous explication of the death penalty suggest that, over the past one hundred years, Sri Lankan Buddhism has affirmed two prominent forms of deontology – namely, pluralism and monism.

Many of the Buddhists that I interviewed appealed to multiple ethical principles in their deontology. As such, their deontological thinking is pluralist. Others, as they grappled with the issue of war, were content to name only one principle, thereby asserting monism in their version of deontology. Yet, given that many who support the contemporary war (even if they are opposed to the government) appeal to the Sri Lankan Buddhist ethical principles of protection of Buddhism and protection of country – *dharmadwipa* – it stands to reason, then, that I came across more pluralistic than monistic theories. To illustrate the pluralistic deontology that suffuses contemporary ideas about Buddhism and war, we shall examine the interview that I had with Sudath Devapura, JP, who, at the time of the interview, was the president of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress. I asked him if Buddhism justifies war; his response, replete with allusions to the *Mahavamsa*, attests to the power of ancient stories to justify contemporary ethical positions:

> Are you asking if Buddhists can go to war? Yes, to protect the country and to protect the religion. But war is a matter of karma – that's why there is war, all bad things done in the past come back to corrupt us – this is why there is war. In the past, too, karma resulted in war. Look at Dutugemunu's war against the Tamils, this was karma. But if it weren't for Dutugemunu, you wouldn't be talking to me now. I give worship to Dutugemunu for allowing us to worship in *dharmadwipa*. He was a great king; he saved this island.

For Devapura, the protection of country and of religion are given the status of ethical principles: these principles, moreover, underlie duties that must be maintained, just as we have been charting throughout this study.

Some of the most illustrious members of the *sangha* – senior monks of long standing in the monastic community – reflected on Dutugemunu's career and his contribution to Sinhala-Buddhist national identity, as they attempted to reconcile

their views about war with the teachings of the Buddha during my interviews. Though the Venerable Bellanwila Wimalaratana, whom we met above, argued that "religion is one thing; politics is quite another,"[75] he nevertheless conflated the political career of Dutugemunu and the action of protection of self and nation, which is *akusala* (demeritorious), at least according to the dharma. This became clear when I asked him about Sudu Nelum, which, as we saw in Chapter 2, is the government's "peace" program. By the time that I interviewed the Venerable Wimalaratana, I had come to learn that many monks (I would, if pressed, venture to say most Sri Lankan monks) are opposed to the government's peace program. Their opposition no longer seemed ironic to me by the time we met. The Venerable Wimalaratana explained that he does not support Sudu Nelum because its agenda undermines the separate identities of each of Sri Lanka's communities:

> the government wants to create one Sri Lanka identity at the expense of discrete identities. You can't ask a Tamil man not to feel like a Tamil. In Britain, there are Welsh, Irish, English – they all have separate identities. It's fine to have those along with a larger identity. Dutugemunu preserved the Sinhala identity. We must preserve it also.

In other words, the Venerable Wimalaratana invokes the hero of the *Mahavamsa*, who preserved the Buddhist character of the island through a war, to underscore his contempt for the government's position on ethnicity and identity. At the same time, however, the Venerable Wimalaratana added, when I asked him about defensive warfare and defensive postures in general, that even Dutugemunu's defense of the island and of Buddhism was nonetheless produced by an *akusala cetana* (an unwholesome thought).[76]

Monks, lay Buddhists, and peace

As we determined in Chapter 2 of this study, due to monks' perceptions of themselves as "sons of the soil," or *bhumiputras*, the *sangha* perpetuates and reinforces the idea that Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalas who are Buddhist. As Professor Aryarasinghe's political party's platform makes clear, however, *bhumiputra* ideology is not the monks' alone; lay Buddhists, too, deem themselves to be sons of the soil. As we have also seen, the commitment to the soil might allow for justifications of violence, even war, if certain conditions are met. At the same time, there are a number of lay people and, in particular, monks, who are committed to their other "historic" mission, that is, to being exemplars of the Buddha's message of peace, to being sons of the Buddha, or Buddhaputras. Though recent scholarship on Sri Lanka has dilated on monkish ratifications of violence, little of that scholarship explores the *sangha's* influence in the peace process. In other words, contemporary scholarship fails to provide a fully textured reading of the monk as both world conqueror and world renouncer, a tension we have been tracing in political rhetoric throughout the twentieth century.

In the contemporary context of war in Sri Lanka, monks play a vital role in shaping opinions about the possibility of peace and many actively pursue a peaceful solution to Sri Lanka's civil war. While some monks, despite criticisms from the *sangha*, are actively involved in Kumaratunga's Sudu Nelum movement (see Chapter 2), and thus advocate war and negotiation at the same time, others actively advance the idea that violence and war can not be countenanced in Buddhism for any reason. Indeed, the burden of, or struggle between, the competing ideologies of Buddhaputra and *bhumiputra* is reflected in the contrast between statements routinely advocating peace to some open advocacies of war. To illustrate the former, a few monks are known to be supporters of Kumaratunga's devolution package, and appeal to Sri Lanka's citizens to review and accept Kumaratunga's proposals. One monk, Professor Kamburugamuve Vajira Thera, has stated that "devolution is a further step to preserve our archeological remains,"[77] insisting that Tamil semi-autonomy would protect the ancient Buddhist temples that recently have been damaged due to the war in the hotly contested northern province. Appealing to the pervasive Sinhala-Buddhist belief, inspired by the *Mahavamsa*, as we have seen, that the entire island of Sri Lanka is the island of the dharma – thrice sanctified by the Buddha himself in magical visits to various locations, including the north – the monk argues that the ancient Buddhist ruins and historic sites of the north can only be preserved if peace is ushered in through negotiation rather than through war.

Though monk advocates of Kumaratunga's devolution package are often cast as traitors, or as pawns of the government,[78] some members of the *sangha* nevertheless urge Sri Lanka's citizens to put their faith in the government to find a solution to the civil war. The Venerable Bopitiya Dhammasiri, for instance, has said that "if the People's Alliance government is trying to solve the ethnic problem by peaceful means or by war, it was the duty of all to support it."[79] Other monks have insisted that a lasting peace "could be achieved only through a political solution,"[80] thereby calling into prominence the Buddhaputra ideology. For instance, the Venerable Bambalapitiye Anandatissa Thera has argued that "if power is not devolved, the country would be divided. Devolution of power is a common feature in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country." Contrary to the consensus of the *sangha*, the venerable monk argues that devolution will actually preserve the unitary status of Sri Lanka rather than threaten its integrity as one nation. It is also of interest to note that the Sri Lankan Group of the World Solidarity Forum advocates a "Noble Eight-Fold Path for Peace" that includes the names of numerous monks among the 109 signatures of its proposal for a resolution to Sri Lanka's civil war; the remainder are Christian clergy (both Sinhala and Tamil), Hindu priests, and other concerned Sri Lankans. Indeed, much of the peace work that is undertaken by Buddhist monks is conducted in a spirit of ecumenism that, as we have noted repeatedly throughout this study, calls into question their patriotism, loyalty, and legitimacy, and renders them vulnerable to attack by other Sinhala Buddhists. Nonetheless, there are monks, who, acting independently, advocate creative means of rallying for peace. For instance, a local Sri Lankan paper recently

reported that one Saman Kumara, supported by the monk of his village, Venerable Bopitiye Sumangala Thera, "carrying the message that peace is the need of the hour," had embarked upon a journey throughout the island on stilts to "bridge the gap between the people in the north and the south and build a united country."[81] The venerable monk has proclaimed that "the teaching of Lord Buddha is the strongest weapon to safeguard world peace."[82] Here, invoking the image of *dharma yuddhaya* as struggle against the mental defilements, the monk calls to our attention the deeply embedded metaphor of righteous struggle in Sinhala-Buddhist ethical thinking. The monk's thinking on war resonates with that of Dr Ariyaratne, founder of Sarvodaya, whom we met in Chapter 3, who has argued, in a personal correspondence to me, that *dharma yuddhaya* is "a technique of facing armed groups with love and compassion totally unarmed."[83] For the Venerable Bopitiye Sumangala, "if we have no peace in our minds it is impossible to impart it to others." The monk, moreover, alludes to dependent-arising as he assumes that all things are connected, and that if one person is peaceful, this shall extend "firstly to members of our family, then to relations, neighbours, villagers, countrymen and finally to the whole world."[84] In keeping with traditional thinking on the logic of "the multiplier effect" of ethical action,[85] and publicly committed to non-violence, the monk maintains that one person can make a difference.

The idea that Buddhism demands an absolute commitment to non-violence and thus to peace initiatives is certainly not new in the Sri Lankan context. In World War II, for instance, concerned lay Buddhists found in Buddhism the remedy for the ailments of a war-torn world:

> On this day [Vesak, which commemorates the birth, death, and enlightenment of the Buddha], owing to the present world situation, one other thought must predominate in our minds. The greater part of the so-called civilised world is today in the grip of war from which there seems to be no escape … Less than a quarter century ago a great war was waged for four years and at the cost of many millions of lives. It was then claimed that that war was fought to put an end to all future wars. But what has since happened has clearly proved how futile has been the endeavour to put an end to war by means of war itself … "Hatred does not cease by hatred, but by love", said the Buddha.[86]

Here, citing the *Dhammapada* as the foundation of an ethical worldview that makes the case that killing in order to ensure peace is not permissible, the writers engage in a deontology that assumes that the act of war is wrong.

In another reflection of world history, a lay Buddhist reflected upon the efficacy of the Buddha's message of peace while analyzing the success of agencies designed to facilitate peace:

> If the word of the Buddha is correctly appreciated by this huge mass of Buddhist adherents and widely disseminated, its collective voice can

> make a profound impact on the rest of the world consisting of big and small powers with conflicting ideologies and religions which threaten to annihilate each other. If one dwells for a moment on the principle of the Buddhadharma enshrined in these words, the question at once suggests itself whether there is not the essence of the highest level of diplomacy practiced today by the United Nations Organisation in its effort to arrest wars whether they be aggressive or defensive: "conquer anger by loving kindness, and evil by good deeds" … Has not the supreme body of the United Nations therefore unambiguously accepted this elementary principle of ahimsa in the Buddhadhamma after experimenting with various other unsuccessful formulae for the peaceful settlement of internal disputes? Is it not universally accepted today that tolerance is the keynote of his teaching and that no other religion embodies tolerance to the degree that Buddhism does?

Here, both defensive and offensive wars are condemned on the basis that the Buddhadharma, that is, the doctrine of the Buddha, with the central tenet of *ahimsa*, does not permit them for any reason.

In the present, various Sri Lankan organizations invite participation in "anti-war rallies" that are designed to call attention to Sri Lanka's protracted war,[87] while youth groups organize peace demonstrations composed primarily of monks. For instance, in 1997, the Voice of Youth peace forum organized a gathering of 1,500 monks, who assembled at Vihara Maha Devi Park in the heart of Colombo,[88] providing a powerful antidote to the monk opponents of the government's devolution proposal. Another monk, a supporter of Kumaratunga's "war for peace," nevertheless highlighted the peace initiatives of the government, even though "certain unidentified persons [have] threatened him and asked him not to permit this program [of peace] to be held in the temple."[89]

No-self as a prescription for peace

Though there are plenty of (Sinhala-Buddhist) Sri Lankans for whom the contemporary conflict is nothing more than "a war to defend the idea of a British colonial construct – a unitary state,"[90] Sinhala-Buddhist culture clearly privileges Buddhist stories and allows them to remain the hegemonic force for shaping ethical opinions about war. Indeed, I would venture to say that, even for those whose (public) expressions regarding the Sinhala–Tamil conflict reveal little in the way of religious sentiments, the idea of war nevertheless is inextricably related to the idea of religion. And while some Sri Lankans trace the roots of the war to the British colonial period, others think more about the future. One Sri Lankan, reflecting on the violence of 1983 and clearly disillusioned by the so-called peace initiatives of the government, has little hope for an imminent solution:

> So given how elusive peace is, given how ineffective the message of the

> local peace industry has been, there is little left to be optimistic about. I expect there to be few changes in the offing. For, it has become very apparent that those who have been fashioning a name for themselves as the captains of the Lankan peace industry are more interested in building their private empires. … And it is very likely that when the new millennium arrives, our status quo will be as stagnant as it is today, with war and violence being the chosen options. The ideas of Black July are still in vogue, I wish, though, I was wrong."[91]

Other Sri Lankans comment on the civil war while directly engaging Buddhist ethics. In an advocacy for an ultimate obligation of non-violence, Bogoda Premaratne in 1988 advanced the notion that the Buddha can be the great healer of cultural malaise:

> Each member of the community agrees to be a non-killer, so that each member of that community can go about his work without fear of being murdered … The voluntary acceptance and observance of these conditions represent a basic moral contract for citizens of any civilized community. However, at this level of public morality, some citizens can, and actually argue as follows: "What harm is there is selective killing, in getting rid of people who stand in the way of our noble endeavour to liberate people?" … Therefore, to obtain a proper diagnosis of the sickness of violence within us and to seek proper treatment, it is appropriate that we consult the Buddha, the Great Physician.[92]

Highlighting the commonly held assumption in Sri Lankan Buddhism that ethics are chosen and not imposed (which we noted in Chapter 2 of this study), Premaratne comments on the government's war against Tamil separatists, arguing that killing, even in order to save lives, is not justified in Buddhist ethics. Premaratne suggests that a solution to the war can be found within Sri Lanka's citizenry:

> My reason for examining the current problem of social violence in the light of the radical approach of the Buddha was to impress upon ourselves the fact that the manifestation of violence has its roots within each one of us, in the thoughts and feelings of each one of us, as long as we are *puthujjana* ["commoner," i.e., someone who does not have right views and behave ethically]. Each of us should contribute to the cooling down process. If one individual is peaceful it means one less in the violent crowd.[93]

In my interview with Premaratne in 1998, he steadfastly argued that the civil war will not be solved in the battlefield; instead, according to Premaratne, we can find a resolution to Sri Lanka's problems in the paradigm of the Buddha's life and in Buddhist ideas about the self. In Premaratne's view, Buddhism never justifies

war, and the fact that the Buddha chose to be a universal teacher (world renouncer) rather than a *cakkavati* (world conqueror) demonstrates that peace is superior to war. And even though Buddhism itself does not justify war, but rather claims that righteous kingship is devoid of aggression in its tenfold formulation,[94] Buddhism allows that not all people will respect righteous kingship. Thus, an army is necessary. Yet, Premaratne averred, one's previous intentional deeds determine if one will have to engage in the less meritorious acts of war. Thus, in Premaratne's line of thinking, though Buddhism honors heads of state, a head of state is bound by certain duties, which might call for war; and the only individuals that will have to preside over an army, such as heads of state, are those with a negative karmic heritage. As much is as true in the present situation of Sri Lanka's context of war, in which the leader of the country must, as her duty, direct her army to engage in war. But, in the end, war cannot achieve anything. Rather, people have to be conditioned to value the teachings of the Buddha. Which is why, Mr Premaratne told me, he was one of the first to praise the PA government's political solution, which he considers to be an alternative proposal to killing (notwithstanding the PA government's "war for peace").

Mr Premaratne was the only person that I interviewed who drew a connection between ideologies about war and the Buddhist ontological arguments regarding the nature of the self. For Mr Premaratne, the true solution to the war can be found if Sinhala Buddhists, including monks, who are driven by "nationalism" rather than the dharma, realize that there is "no-self" to preserve. And if there is no self, then there is nothing to protect, nothing to defend. While Premaratne believes that self-defense is justified – "Buddhism doesn't have to tell anyone to protect themselves; this is instinctual" – he nevertheless argued that Buddhist identity politics, if properly understood, have the potential to foster ethnic harmony.[95]

Mr Premarante's thinking on war mirrors many of the complicated strands of ideology on war we have been charting throughout this study. On the one hand, Mr Premaratne does not believe that Buddhism justifies war for any reason. On the other hand, he allows that Buddhism permits self-defense, including the defense of national values, and that proper authorities must resort to war if under attack. But, like the Buddha of the texts, who, as we noted in Chapter 2, taught that victors in war eventually will be losers and vice versa – that war ultimately achieves nothing – Premaratne's thinking on war suggests something similar – namely, that proper views, rather than war, will allow for peace to prevail.

The bomb in South Asia: Buddhism and war rethought

As we have seen repeatedly throughout this study, context tends to determine ethical orientations about war in Sri Lanka, and Mr Premaratne's views do not present an exception. Soon after India's 1998 nuclear testing, a time in which the world began to take note of South Asia's nuclear capabilities, Sri Lankans voiced their opinions about their neighbors to the north, revealing yet another discourse

about war in Sri Lanka. Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, whom we met in Chapter 1, publicly declared that 'Sri Lanka does not support sanctions against India," because sanctions "imply judgment from a moral high ground … and few countries can take a moral high ground on such issues."[96] Pakistan, apparently outraged by Kadirgamar's remarks, because of "Sri Lanka's commitment to non-violence,"[97] and because Sri Lanka is a signatory to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, challenged the Foreign Minister to defend Sri Lanka's position.

Kadirgamar was not the only Sri Lankan to voice his opinion publicly about India's nuclear capabilities. Mervyn de Silva, famous for his political commentaries, faulted the Western press for framing their discussion of South Asia's nuclear power in religious terms:

> B-o-o-m … the bomb, promptly introduced as the HINDU Bomb by the Western media. Strange, strange. When various Christian nations exploded their monstrous weapons, nobody cared to introduce the infernal mass-murderer in terms of its religious or racial identity. Now the Indian bomb has become the Hindu answer to Pakistan's Islamic bomb or bomb-in-the-making. What do we call the Chinese bomb? Not the Confucian, one trusts.[98]

De Silva insists that the West's attitude toward India's nuclear weapons is "no more than an extension of the fundamental fact of an unequal distribution of power."[99] Ameen Izzadeen, another commentator, pointed out in a newspaper column that "history's first nuclear bomb was dropped by the US. Was Harry S. Truman, the US President at that time, a mad man [as is suggested about India's leadership now in the US press]?"[100]

Izzadeen's and de Silva's opinions suggest that much of the rhetoric in the aftermath of India's nuclear testing questioned the propriety of the USA or the West in determining India's local and international agenda and policies, which has obvious implications for Sri Lanka's political program. Though I scoured the Sinhala and English newspapers, I failed to find a commentary that problematized the issue of the nuclear testing within the context of Buddhism. Moreover, no-one writing in Sri Lanka addressed the significance of the day that India chose to test its nuclear capabilities, that is, Vesak, or the commemoration of the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, which is, quite arguably, the most important Buddhist holiday of the year. Significantly, according to a widely held belief in the West, when in 1974 India successfully completed the first detonation of a nuclear device, the code phrase, "the Buddha is smiling," echoed among scientists. That first experiment, like its 1998 *avatar*, was also conducted on Vesak.

In a commentary that appeared a year earlier, Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu compared Sri Lanka's war to "what happened to Hiroshima," though he noted that the Sri Lankan conflict cannot "be equated in scale." Yet he nevertheless drew his readers attention to the words of the architect of the nuclear bomb, Robert Oppenheimer, who, as he gazed upon the mushroom cloud hovering over

Hiroshima, is said to have quoted Krishna of the *Bhagavad Gita*: "I am become death, the shatterer of worlds." Saravanamuttu speculated that Oppenheimer's words, or perhaps, Krishna's, also have relevance in the context of Sri Lanka's war.[101]

Neither Kadirgamar, de Silva, Izzadeen, nor Saravanamuttu writes as a Buddhist (in fact, only one of the four is a Buddhist); in other words, the loudest voices in Sri Lanka on nuclear power and warfare do not represent the dominant Sinhala-Buddhist ideology that we have been tracing in this study. Rather, the deafening silence of the Sinhala-Buddhist hardliners on the issue of nuclear war, the lack of outrage regarding the alignment of a nuclear bomb with the Buddha, tends to suggest, as does the ethical thinking that we have mapped in this chapter, that Sinhala Buddhism can be remarkably ambivalent about the issue of war.

5

SRI LANKAN BUDDHISM AND JUST-WAR THINKING REVISITED

Introduction: rituals, relics and war

Over the past few decades, scholarship on Sri Lanka has focused upon changes in Sri Lankan Buddhism, changes that have led Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere to conclude, as the title of their 1988 opus suggests, that Buddhism has been transformed. They document, as part of that transformation, a new emphasis in the devotional ritual (*puja*) associated with the Bodhi tree, that is, the tree (and its offshoots planted throughout the island) under which (tradition claims) the Buddha was enlightened. Though a traditional *bodhi puja* "involves the participation only of the person, whether monk or layman," and "takes only a couple of minutes," the new *bodhi puja* "takes well over an hour," and a "congregation is actively involved."[1] As Gombrich and Obeyesekere explain, the new form of *bodhi puja* can be traced to the 1970s, since which time they have been able to chart the development of devotional texts associated with the *puja*. In the present, despite the intentions of the monk who redefined the ritual in the 1970s and popularized it, the *bodhi puja* is performed "for worldly ends";[2] in the past, the ritual celebrated the tree and its association with the Buddha's enlightenment. According to Gombrich and Obeyesekere, the *bodhi puja* has "become something of a national ritual for Sinhala Buddhists." Yet, at the same time, they argue that the ritual does not form "part of the civic religion [nor] is [it] associated with the state." Gombrich and Obeyesekere note, however, that, given the wide emotional appeal of the *bodhi puja*, "it is not surprising, though deeply ironic, that services have been held with the express purpose of bringing success to the Sinhala army waging war against the Tamils in the north and east."[3] It is with Gombrich and Obeyesekere's sense of irony over the *bodhi puja's* use in the context of war that I would like to begin my final reflection upon just-war thinking in Sri Lankan Buddhism.

One of the points of this study, and a point that has been made for many years, is that the Sinhala people's relationship to Sri Lanka must be viewed in light of their notion (based on the *Mahavamsa*) that the island is thrice blessed by the Buddha. In those three visits, the Buddha is said to have traversed the island, from one corner to the other, sanctifying sixteen places as he used them for meditation. Indeed, it can be argued that Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka treats the

island, given the Buddha's relationship to it, as a "relic of use" (*paribhogika dhatu*) of the Buddha, a point, as we have seen, that was adumbrated by Robert Lingat in his study of King Asoka and admirably addressed by Josine van der Horst in her study of President Premadasa.[4] As Kevin Trainor has pointed out, it is a sacred duty to protect the Buddha's relics, whether bodily or otherwise. Indeed, according to a (fifth-century CE) commentary of the canonical *Anguttara Nikaya*, "those who destroy a *cetiya* [reliquary], cut down a Bodhi-tree, or attack a relic are guilty of a grave offense equivalent to an *anantariya* act, i.e., an action so heinous that it inevitably results in the perpetrator's being reborn in one of the Buddhist hells."[5] That the commentary to the *Anguttara Nikaya* equates the destruction of a relic of the Buddha to an attack on him is clear when we consider that *anantariya* acts, according to canonical injunctions, include "shedding the blood of a Buddha."[6] In short, the Theravadin textual tradition, in its doctrine of relics, testifies to the continuing powerful presence of the Buddha even after his death.

Protection of and claim to the Buddha's relics, particularly his bodily relics (*saririka dhatu*), is further attested in the Pali canon, specifically in the *Mahaparnibbana Sutta* (MPNS). According to the MPNS, the Pali canonical text that describes the final days of the Buddha, eight clans laid claim to a share of the Buddha's bodily remains when news reached them of his death. The material for this scene from the MPNS became the subject of the bas-reliefs at the *stupa* (reliquary) at Sanchi in India, which dates roughly to the second century BCE. According to the art at Sanchi, claims to the Buddha's relics did not go uncontested; the bas-reliefs paint a picture of impending war. Indeed, "[t]hough the text does not actually describe the various groups drawing up their armies in preparation for battle, this image of an imminent armed conflict [had become] deeply etched in the imagination of later Buddhists."[7] And while the MPNS does not describe the battle scene, it avers that the clans were willing to wage war as a means of exerting their claims. Like the other canonical texts that we studied in Chapter 2, then, the MPNS episode regarding the aftermath of the Buddha's demise illustrates the ambiguities of Theravadin Buddhist attitudes toward war. Moreover, it is significant from the point of view of this study that, in the MPNS, the eight clans demanded a share of the Buddha's bodily relics on the basis of caste; as each of the royal claimants exclaims, the Buddha, like each king, was a *khattiya*, thereby underscoring early Buddhism's notion of the paradigmatic life of a buddha and its association with the ideals of the world conqueror as well as of the world renouncer.[8] Indeed, the MPNS creates a tension between the paradigms of world conqueror and world renouncer when it explains that, according to the Buddha himself, the remains of the body of a buddha are to be treated like the remains of a righteous king, as we saw in Chapter 2.[9] As we also saw in that chapter, the complicated imagery of the canonical version of the wheel-turning monarch, or righteous world conqueror, lends itself to an interpretation in which violence, even war, might be necessary under certain conditions. Along these lines, it is equally significant that the commentary to the MPNS uses a military metaphor in its explication of the moment in which the Buddha renounces the life principle; it

explains that "as a warrior breaks his armour after the battle,"[10] so the Buddha resolved to pass away.

At the same time that the MPNS and its commentary weave metaphors of war and allusions to war into its depiction of the final days of the Buddha, the MPNS explains that securing the Buddha's relics was by no means a justified cause for waging war. This is made plain by the arrival and intervention of Dona, a brahmin who declares that, given "our Buddha was a speaker of patience (*khanti vado*), unfitting, indeed, is a battle (*sampaharo*) over the division of the bodily remains of the most supreme person."[11] It is significant that, in the text, Dona does not argue that the Buddha forbade war and, therefore, resort to war would be against the Buddha's teachings. In other words, Dona does not appeal to an ethical principle, as a deontologist might, that prohibits war. Rather, he argues that, in this instance, resort to war cannot be defended. In dilating on Dona's opinions why contested claims to the Buddha's relics do not justify war, the MPNS suggests that the monk authors of the Theravadin Buddhist textual tradition contemplated the conditions under which wars might justifiably be waged. Moreover, the themes of war and the Buddha's bodily remains on the Sanchi *stupa* imply that early Buddhists imagined that their predecessors would have resorted to war – that Buddhists might have waged war – had not Dona interceded with advice to be patient. The themes insinuate further that the monk editors of the MPNS and other early Buddhists contextualized their thinking about war, bringing to bear particular moral reasoning on particular issues and problems related to war, rather than some sort of general and consistent approach. In short, as the MPNS treatment of the Buddha's relics and the reliefs on the Sanchi *stupa* suggest, texts (and art) are media in which Buddhists debated ethical theories, including theories about war.

Study of the MPNS, then, with its treatment of the Buddha's remains, yields the idea that we should pay attention to the idea of relics, their power, and their veneration in order to understand early Buddhists' ideas about war and its justification. Indeed, I would argue that we must take note of the idea of relics in Sri Lankan Buddhism – both in text and context – in order to understand the relationship between war and the dharma in the modern era. While a claim to the Buddha's bodily relics (*saririka dhatu*) does not constitute just cause to go to war in the MPNS, protection of Sri Lanka which, as was suggested above, is a metaphorical relic touched or used by the Buddha (*paribhogika dhatu*), amounts to just cause to declare war in the *Mahavamsa*; that justification, as we have noted throughout this study, is invoked in the present.

In fact, it will be remembered that when Dutugemunu approaches Elara in the beginning of his battle to "bring glory to the dharma," he does so with a relic of the Buddha in his spear. In this scene from the *Mahavamsa*, intersection of the *saririka dhatu* (the Buddha's relic in the spear) and the *paribhogika dhatu* (the relic, in this case the island, used by the Buddha) legitimates Dutugemunu's resort to war: the encased relic of the Buddha in Dutugemunu's weapon at once provides protection for, and legitimation of, the king's impending war. And the cause to go

to war – bringing glory to the dharma in the land thrice sanctified and used by the Buddha – reinforces the justice of the war. In the *Mahavamsa's* manipulation of relic ideology, then, the glorification of the dharma on the Buddha's island is articulated as just cause for war. Moreover, the relic in Dutugemunu's spear renders action sacred whereas the combination of the Buddha's trips to, and use of, the island renders space sacred.

Before we pursue further the idea of Sri Lanka as a relic of the Buddha and related notions of war we must appreciate the role that the Buddha's bodily relics have played in the legitimation of temporal authority in Buddhist Sri Lanka. As is well known, and as the *Culavamsa* suggests, before the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815, each Sri Lankan monarch since the twelfth century had bolstered his claim to the throne by his possession of the Buddha's Tooth Relic.[12] For instance, according to the *Culavamsa*, King Parakramabahu I (reigned 1153–86) fought a war for the Tooth Relic (a bodily relic), and the Buddha's alms bowl (a relic of use), in order to legitimate his rule:

> My head adorned with a costly diadem sparkling with the splendour of various precious stones, would only be consecrated by the longed-for contact with the two sacred relics of the Great Master, the Tooth and the Alms-bowl.[13]

Having proclaimed that, without the Buddha's relics, his right to rule would be illegitimate, Parakramabahu I then instructs his army to "conquer the hostile army" and speedily send him the relics. Unlike the alms-bowl, however, the Tooth Relic continues to be attested to as a sacralizer and legitimator of political power throughout the *Culavamsa's* treatment of kings from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries. In sum, as H. L. Seneviratne has noted:

> It [the Tooth Relic] is moved to new sites of government as soon as they are founded. The kings try to claim sovereignty by capturing it; wars for the political domination are conceived as wars for the capture of the Dalada [Tooth Relic]. When kings flee at the advent of an enemy they carry the Dalada away with them.[14]

If war for the sake of possession of the Buddha's Tooth Relic is a feature of the history of kingship in Sri Lanka, so is royal patronage and worship of it upon and subsequent to its seizure. For instance, according to the *Culavamsa*, Vijayarajasiha (1739–47), during his reign:

> placed on a silver throne the Tooth of the Prince of the wise [i.e. the Buddha]. He arranged a great festival, made a sacrifice to the relic and after cleansing the whole town in a worthy manner … flung himself on the ground in most humble posture and so worshiped the Tooth of the Prince of the wise.[15]

In short, the king venerated the Tooth Relic of the Buddha as if it were the Buddha himself. That much was required of him, for, according to Seneviratne, the Sinhala conception of righteous rule "could be explained under three headings: (1) the protection of the Sasana, the "Buddhist church" [that is, protection of the dharma], (2) good government, and (3) performance of ritual to the Dalada."[16]

Even after the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815, temporal authority continued to reside in the Tooth Relic which, by then, had become thoroughly entrenched as the royal palladium in the Buddhist culture of the island. Even the British, who, with the fall of the Kingdom, finally held authority over the entire island, understood the meaning of the Tooth Relic in the traditional alliance between religion and politics: they agreed to protect the Tooth and ensure the smooth functioning of Buddhism. In other words, the British were aware that, in traditional Sinhala culture, veneration of the Tooth Relic was tantamount to re-membering the Buddha.

In the post-independence period, which increasingly has been marked by a return to the political values that are associated with Sri Lanka's legacy of monarchy, there has been a heightened awareness of the role of the Tooth Relic and its power to legitimate temporal authority. For instance, over the past few decades, soon after they were elected, each of the heads of state of Sri Lanka, including J. R. Jayewardene, Ranasinghe Premadasa, D. B. Wijetunga, and Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, made a pilgrimage from Colombo, the seat of temporal power, to Kandy, where the Tooth Relic is housed and thus the seat of spiritual power, in order to reinforce their political authority by seeking a blessing from the relic. Of course, it is significant that they also requested blessings from Hindu, Muslim, and Christian religious bodies in the early weeks of their tenure, actions required by the specifically South Asian notion of secularism (as we saw in Chapter 1, the state aims to be evenhanded in its dealings with religion). At the same time, inasmuch as the blessings of the Tooth Relic are sought first, with much hoopla and media coverage, Buddhism emerges as "first among equals."[17] Indeed, the traditional Sinhala requirement – that righteous rule entails patronage of the Tooth – finds its modern-day manifestation in politicians' pilgrimages to Kandy, where the Dalada "resides." Indeed, in this "Buddhist secularism" that is unique to Sri Lanka (see Chapter 1), the present government keeps its citizens aware of its financial support of Buddhism,[18] while it "introduce[s] measures to implement systematic financial management with regard to financial contributions received by the Dalada Maligawa [the Temple of the Tooth],"[19] because the government has "realised the commitment to protect and promote the Buddha Sasana."[20]

For the purposes of this study, moreover, it is very significant that, whether or not each of the heads of state believed it to be the case, Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition has assumed the paradox that, though the Buddha is dead and thus beyond reach, his bodily relics nonetheless (re)present him, a point fully explored by Trainor. Indeed, the argument can be made that each of the island's claimants to political power (in the pre-independence period, beginning with the twelfth century

and, likewise, in the post-independence period) has vied for possession of the Buddha's Tooth Relic or has sought its blessings because of "the functional equivalence between the Buddha's relics and his living presence."[21]

The *Mahavamsa* and relic veneration

Sri Lanka's textual tradition, too, both implicitly and explicitly, assumes that the Buddha's bodily relics present the Buddha. Indeed, the very first chapter of the *Mahavamsa* introduces relic worship as an indispensable aspect of Buddhist religiosity: verses 33 through 36 recount the story of one Mahusumana who "craved of him who should be worshiped, something to worship." The Buddha himself supplies a bodily relic – namely, a handful of hairs. Mahasumana then significantly encases those hairs, received in a "golden urn," in a reliquary "at the place where the Master had sat," that is, in a spot on the island that the Buddha himself had used.

As we noted in Chapter 1 of this study, King Dutugemunu is first introduced in the *Mahavamsa* (immediately following the story of Mahasumana) in a scene that recounts the history of the collar-bone relic of the Buddha; Dutugemunu is responsible for the final encasement of the relic "while he made war upon the *damilas*." And what is the relationship between, for instance, the relic that Mahusumana established, or the Buddha's collar bone, and the Buddha himself? The *Mahavamsa* provides an answer, directly claiming at one point that "a wise person … venerates the Sage's relic just as the Sugata [well-gone one, that is, the Buddha] alive";[22] and, as we have seen, the *Culavamsa*, in its recounting of kingly exploits to seize the Tooth Relic, draws an equivalence between the Buddha's presence and his bodily remains. Moreover, the texts aver that the Buddha's presence is not limited to the Tooth; as we noted in Chapter 2, in the *Mahavamsa's* saga of Dutugemunu, Dutugemunu's spear, with its encasement of one of the Buddha's (unidentified) relics, provides essential equivalence between the living Buddha and his dead body. The relic in the spear, therefore, like the Tooth Relic, attests to the Theravadin paradox that, though the Buddha has attained ultimate enlightenment and theoretically is no longer accessible, he is still present in some sense.

The island of Sri Lanka as a relic of use

As we have seen in this study, a distinctive Sri Lankan Buddhist worldview renders the island of Sri Lanka a Buddhist "promised land." By using the term "promised land," I do not mean to imply that Sri Lanka is to the Sinhala Buddhists what Israel has meant for the Jews. Nevertheless, I think we can profit from a brief examination of the promised-land concept as it applies to Israel. I take as my starting point the work of Jonathan Z. Smith, who has opened up Judaism and Christianity to the tools of historians of religion and their categories, including land and its value. As Smith has argued, the transformation of land into holy land,

or promised land, for the Jews, is ultimately connected to the relationship that the Jews have had with the land:

> It is that one has cultivated the land, died on the land, that one's ancestors are buried in the land, that rituals have been performed in the land, that one's deity has been encountered here and there that renders the land a homeland, a land-for-man and holy land.[23]

In the case of Israel, moreover, tradition "narrate[s] a primordial charter to the land"; the land is Israel's promised land because "god established it for her in the beginning."[24] In the case of Sinhala Buddhism and its association with land, however, it was not God (or a god) who established the island for the Sinhala people in the beginning, but rather the Buddha. And as we saw in Chapter 1 of this study, according to the *Mahavamsa* and its story of the island's primordial charter, in his three visits to the island, during which he cleared the land of inimical forces and meditated as he went along, the Buddha sanctified the island, one aspect of which was his proclaiming that its human inhabitants – commonly assumed by the Sinhala people to be the Sinhala people – would be responsible for its preservation.

It is significant that Sinhala responsibility for the island's destiny is such a common assumption in Sinhala culture that D. S. Senanayake, Sri Lanka's first post-independence prime minister, known for his Western-style secular thinking, nonetheless was able to proclaim in 1939 (in English), doubtless to energize the crowds, that the Sinhalas "are one blood and one nation. We are a chosen people. Buddha said that his religion would last for 5,500 [*sic*] years. That means that we, as the custodians of that religion, shall last as long."[25] Like the Jews, another "chosen people," for whom "possession of such a land is a responsibility, for the blessing of the land is a fragile thing,"[26] Sinhala Buddhists, at least during the course of the twentieth century, have focused upon their religious duty to their land; as we saw in Chapter 3, using the politics of space and language. Some Sri Lankans have urged that the island "belongs" to the Buddhists who are Sinhala, while others have justified even war to maintain possession of it. However, this *Mahavamsa*-based thinking is not accepted by all Sinhalas: to illustrate, in 1948, during a debate in the Ceylon Parliament regarding citizenship for stateless Indian tea-estate workers, Dr N. M. Perera, a well-known leftist, proclaimed that "we [Sinhalas] cannot proceed as if we are God's chosen race quite apart from the rest of the world; that we and we alone have a right to be citizens of this country."[27] As Perera's remarks suggest, for Sinhala Buddhists who embrace the principle of exclusiveness based on a mythic charter which links them to the island, to use Jonathan Smith's words, "the security of the land is not guaranteed."[28]

The Jewish textual tradition, replete with wars fought to maintain possession of the land, teaches that the Israelites invoked the deity in their struggles to keep the land. While it would be absurd to say that the Buddhist textual tradition of Sri Lanka teaches a similar concept – not least because there is no character like

Yahweh in its cosmic struggles (indeed, we are dealing here with a profoundly different cosmos) – nonetheless we can draw a parallel between Jewish and Sinhala-Buddhist notions of land. For, as we have seen, even though the Buddha has attained final enlightenment and, in theory, is no longer accessible, veneration of, and desire for, his relics imply his presence; and his presence (in the form of a relic), despite his absence, has been the object of many of the struggles recounted in the Sinhala-Buddhist textual tradition. Indeed, in that tradition, as we have seen, kings waged wars to secure the Tooth Relic; one king, namely, Dutugemunu, fought against usurpers in his Buddhist land with a relic of the Buddha in his spear. Here, Dutugemunu invokes a powerful force, the presence of the Buddha, as he becomes invulnerable to the might of the *damilas*. In the present, as some contemporary Sinhala Buddhists draw a connection between themselves and the island, to the exclusion of the Tamils, they claim that the land has been won from the Tamils, and that Dutugemunu has won it for them.

But it is not solely Dutugemunu's weapon, with its relic of the Buddha, that renders available the absent Buddha. As the material collected in this book suggests, it can be argued that the island itself, at least since the early decades of the twentieth century, has functioned as a relic of the Buddha. The textual tradition makes the same assumption: as we have seen from our study of the *Mahavamsa*, when the Buddha traversed the island, rendering it sacred, he used sixteen particular locations for his meditations, thereby unifying all of Sri Lanka as a relic of use. According to Theravadin Buddhist tradition, things used by the Buddha, *paribhogika dhatu*, like his bodily relics, are to be protected.

This sentiment regarding Sri Lanka as a relic of use suffuses a recent editorial in "the only newspaper demonstrating the Noble Aspirations of Sinhala Buddhists," by Professor Ariyasinghe, whom we met in Chapter 4:

> Neither the Dark One [S. Thondaman, the Tamil Minister of Agriculture] nor the Fair One [Chandrika Kumaratunga, the President] has the right to part with any part of the country of the Buddha that is Sinhaladwipa [the island of the Sinhala people].[29]

In this reference to Thondaman, who has been accused of trying to establish a Tamil homeland in the central highlands of Sri Lanka,[30] fear of the island's division is cast in Buddhist terms; the Buddha's immanence spans the entire island of Sri Lanka, despite his *parinibbana*. In another recent example, a Buddhist political organization, the Ruhunu Ekabaddha Jathika Peramuna (the Ruhunu Undivided Racial Group), located in Ruhunu, which is, not incidentally, considered to be Dutugemunu's birthplace, warns the government that "if it [the government] implements the new draft constitution ancient Buddhist temples in Nagadeepa, Seruwavila and Deegawapi will come under the purview of the regional councils set up in the north and east."[31] In this expression of anxiety regarding three ancient sites connected with the Buddha's visits to the island and which are in the hotly contested areas which at present are de facto Tamil territory, politics and Sinhala-

Buddhist religious worldviews collide in an assessment of the island as a relic of the Buddha's use.

If we are correct in assuming that Sri Lankan Buddhism, in its attitude toward relics, makes the case that the island is the functional equivalent of a relic of use, and that it thus serves as the living presence of the Buddha, then we might be better able to understand contemporary Sinhala-Buddhist attitudes toward the island and what has come to constitute just cause for war. Put differently, it can be argued that anxiety over the integrity of Sri Lanka, which, as we saw in Chapter 3, has shaped political rhetoric for at least one hundred years, attests to the powerful presence of the Buddha. As we have noted, and as the Theravadin Buddhist textual tradition (canonical and post-canonical) suggests, the relics are homologized to the Buddha's living presence and, as such, are to be safeguarded. Which is why, perhaps, when the *Sinhala Commission Report*, which we have reviewed in this study and which we will examine further below, came under attack by the Media Minister, Mangala Samaraweera, 2,000 monks gathered in Colombo to protest.[32] Arguing that the Report, which outlines the alleged abuses of the Sinhala people under various "foreign" presences, including the British and the Tamil, belonged in the "dustbin of history,"[33] Minister Samaraweera challenged the idea that Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalas, thereby suggesting that neither the topography of the island, nor its ancient sites, comprise a sacred map of the body of the Buddha.

But, as we have seen repeatedly throughout this study, it is not just the textual tradition or contemporary political and religious rhetoric that homologizes the island of Sri Lanka to the Buddha: Sinhala-Buddhist just-war ideology about Sri Lanka proclaims the Buddha's immanence. All of this affords us a glimpse into what Theodore H. Gaster, in his work on the ancient Near East, has termed the "topocosm," or "the entire complex of any given locality conceived as a living organism."[34] The topocosm, moreover, "if it is bodied forth as a real and concrete organism in the present, it exists also as an ideal, timeless entity, embracing but transcending the here and now." And it is myths, and particularly rituals, in any given context, such as the *bodhi puja* with which I began this chapter, that provide the "connecting link" between the past and present.[35] All of this perhaps helps us to see that the performance of the *bodhi puja*, to protect soldiers fighting for a unified Sri Lanka, is not as contradictory as it seems at first glance. Sri Lanka as topocosm, linked as it is to relic veneration and protection, explains the alignment between a Buddhist ritual and defensive, protective war.

Buddhist vows and dharmic acts

We have seen that the case can be made that the just-war criterion of just cause is fulfilled in the *Mahavamsa* story of the war between Dutugemunu and Elara. Indeed, based on the evidence of the *Mahavamsa*, we have noted that just cause includes the protection and glorification of the dharma and of the island of the Buddha and his dharma. And while the textual story delineates this criterion of cross-cultural just-war thinking, the *Mahavamsa's* ideas about just cause are

nonetheless peculiar to the South Asian setting. That is, for instance, if we view the literary just-cause criterion through the lens of Theravada Buddhism, we find that the criterion must be understood within the context of an "act of truth," *satyakriya*, an ancient form of acting with righteous intent.

As van der Horst informs us in her study of former President Premadasa of Sri Lanka, "the procedure of a *Satyakriya* is that a (private or public) declaration is made which includes a noble wish."[36] In its ancient, literary form, the *satyakriya* is "inevitably performed by the Bodhisattva [i.e., the Buddha, in his previous lives] and by kings."[37] This, of course, further underscores the tension between the literary and real paradigms of world renouncer and world conqueror that we have been mapping throughout this study. And the *satyakriya* is not merely an ancient relic of the literary past. Indeed, versions of the truth act are performed in the present. But first we must appreciate the ancient form in order to understand its use in contemporary Sri Lanka.

Among the acts of truth discussed by van der Horst, Dutugemunu's declaration of war against Elara, the purpose of which, it will be remembered, was to bring glory to the dharma, is the most pertinent to our study. Contrary to Edmund Leach, who has claimed that Dutugemunu's words amount to a declaration of "holy war," van der Horst sees in Dutugemunu's words a formal *satyakriya*. According to van der Horst, Dutugemunu's public declaration, noble in its scope, must be viewed in the light of his words that immediately follow: "And even as this is truth may the armour of my soldiers take the colour of fire" (*Mahavamsa* XXV.17). Here, in his reference to the truth (*satya*) of his impending deed (*kriya*) to bring glory to Buddhism, Dutugemunu points to his righteousness; according to its literary form, a *satyakriya* must be performed by a righteous person. All of this makes it ever the more interesting that Elara, Dutugemunu's enemy, is also recorded in the *Mahavamsa* as having performed a *satyakriya*. The usurper and his *satyakriya* are introduced at the same time; in chapter XXII of the text, we meet Elara, "a *damila* of noble descent … who came hither … to seize the kingdom" (XXII.13) and who eventually performs a noble act to ensure proper rainfall. Twenty-one of the thirty-four verses of the chapter tell the story of the *damila* king's noble deed and his necessary righteousness. Though Elara, who, according to the text, "knew not the peerless virtues of the most precious of the three gems [i.e., the Buddha]", his righteousness was such that he could effect a noble goal – namely, ensuring good weather for his citizens: "he underwent a fast, thinking, 'A king who observes justice surely obtains rain in due season' " (XXII.29). In the end, Elara's act of truth is successful; proper weather is restored. Dutugemunu, too, performs a successful *satyakriya*: as he enters into battle with Elara, he vows to bring glory to the dharma; according to the *Mahavamsa's* author, Dutugemunu is effective. That Elara fails to perform a *satyakriya* as he enters into battle against Dutugemunu, despite the *Mahavamsa's* own evidence that Elara had previously undertaken a vow of truth, underscores the righteousness of Dutugemunu's cause for war. Here, then, a *Mahavamsa* criterion of just war – namely, that there must be just cause, rendered in the text as the protection of Buddhism – is reinforced by its

contextualization within an act of truth. The king's success, moreover, inasmuch as it is linked to a *satyakriya*, is based on his righteousness. For, in traditional Sinhala belief, "the fact that a society functions with some degree of smoothness and the balance of natural phenomena are more or less maintained, is evidence for the existence of righteous rule."[38] At the same time, problems in society, or imbalance of natural phenomena, point to unrighteous rule. Thus, the purpose of the *satyakriya* is twofold: if successful, the truth act restores order; a successful *satyakriya*, moreover, demonstrates the righteousness of the ruler.

In the late 1980s, as Sri Lankans struggled in an increasingly war-torn country, with the Sinhala–Tamil conflict in the north and the bloody JVP insurrection in the south, opposition to President Premadasa manifested itself in the ritual of *satyakriya*. Though, in traditional Sinhala belief, a *satyakriya* is a kingly or religious prerogative, in contemporary Sinhala politics, where there is no monarchy, truth acts are performed by politicians who contest for ultimate political power. Yet, as in their ancient manifestations in regard to kingship, contemporary acts of truth are also equated with good governance and the protection of Buddhism. This much is made clear in a review of Ranasinghe Premadasa's presidency and challenges to it. As van der Horst has noted, during his tenure as president (1987–93), Ranasinghe Premadasa regarded himself as a Buddhist king, couching his rhetoric of the right to rule in the protection of Buddhism. Politicians who opposed him, however, questioned his public and monarchical persona by performing *satyakriyas* which, as we have noted, are a kingly privilege. Premadasa reinterpreted the Sri Lankan presidency by following the allegedly Buddhist Asoka's kingly example of malevolence and benevolence (see Chapter 1 of this study) as he addressed Tamil claims for Eelam, a homeland in the north of Sri Lanka (see Chapter 3) and the JVP insurrection in the south, which meant supporting the use of violence and declaring war when he deemed it necessary. His opposition viewed the fragmented nature of Sri Lanka differently, however, claiming that their country's perilous condition was a result of Premadasa's unrighteousness. In order to prove their fitness to lead, as well as to reform society, they staged a series of "truth acts" which were intended to undermine Premadasa's authority.[39] Moreover, while Premadasa drew parallels between his leadership and the legendary righteous Buddhist king, Asoka, his opposition (re-)introduced the legendary Dutugemunu as the paradigmatic king, emphasizing their quest for the country's liberation.[40] In contemporary Sri Lanka, then, ancient Buddhist narratives of kings and their righteousness imbue political rhetoric and ideas about good governance, while the performance of truth acts continues to be associated with political authority. In other words, in contemporary Sri Lanka, narratives of Buddhist kings and their acts are not arcane remnants of a former monarchical society. Rather, they are experienced as real and viable paradigms for ethical behavior in the present.

Thus far, we have explored the performance of the *satyakriya* in highly charged political contexts, albeit contexts inextricably tied to religion. Yet, inasmuch as the *bodhisattva*, that is, the Buddha-to-be, in previous lifetimes performed

satyakriyas in non-political contexts, his literary life set the precedent for its use by religious people for religious ends. Just as the *bodhisattva*, when he lived his life as a quail, as a result of "observing law throughout his life,"[41] was able to quell a fire that threatened to consume his nest, today Buddhist monks perform *satyakriyas* to bring peace to the country.[42] According to modern practices and to the Buddhist textual tradition, therefore, truth acts can be performed to achieve a variety of purposes, which range from being successful in war to ensuring peace. The range of uses of a *satyakriya* – from war to peace – moreover, conforms to the PA "war for peace" in *dharmadwipa*, the island of the dharma, as we saw in Chapter 2. Furthermore, that truth acts are the prerogative of both the monk and the politician further conflates the paradigms of world renouncer and world conqueror in contemporary Sri Lankan society.

Indeed, while it is certainly the case in theory that any righteous person can successfully perform a *satyakriya*, in the contemporary Sri Lankan context, as in the Buddhist textual tradition, truth acts are normally associated with political leaders or Buddhist religious figures. As we noted in Chapter 1, Sri Lankan Buddhist culture, both ancient and modern, makes few distinctions between what secularists in the West might refer to as the religious sphere and the political sphere. Indeed, in the present, the expectation that politicians will nurture Buddhism and that monks will advise those who govern – an expectation that is formally enshrined in the constitution[43] – testifies to the fundamental relationship between Buddhism, governance, and the integrity of Sri Lanka. Along these lines, in contemporary Sri Lanka, it is expected that representatives of the army will receive Buddhist blessings as they embark on battle; photographs of army personnel with Buddhist monks at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy are a common feature in the national press.[44]

Soon after the Temple of the Tooth was bombed in 1998, ostensibly by separatist Tamils, "several thousand" Buddhists, "defying police orders" in Kandy, "crashed into the Mahamaluwa of Sri Dalada Maligawa [Temple of the Tooth] … to join [the] Maha Sangha [order of monks] observing Sathyakriyawa [Sinhala for the Sanskrit, *satyakriya*] to condemn the LTTE bomb attack."[45] Performing a *satyakriya* for the "love of the country," both monks and laity demonstrated that, in the present context of war, Buddhist truth acts are meant to accomplish a variety of goals, not the least of which is calling attention to the plight of Buddhism, which, in the case of the 1998 bombing of the Temple of the Tooth, was perceived to be in great peril. Indeed, the bombing of the Temple is a watershed: since the event, many monks, including the chief prelates of the three monastic fraternities (*nikayas*), have urged the government to continue fighting the LTTE until all terrorists are annihilated.

Monastic advocates of war against the LTTE

As we have seen throughout this study, many monks advocate war, couching their justifications in religious rhetoric, to stop inimical forces from dividing the

island or from corrupting Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Regarding the former, it is significant that the Venerable Maha Kumbukgollewe Gnanasara Thera of Vavuniya, a town in the north that is contested by the LTTE and the Sinhala government, argued in a sermon to a youth group that "Sri Lankans are a nation with a strong backbone. They never ran back in fear." Drawing on the *Mahavamsa's* legends about the brave Sinhala people, the monk advocated defensive war: "If you [are] at Anuradhapura and are attacked do not run south. Come to Vavuniya and join us [in our war against the LTTE]. The victory of war is not with the defence forces but with the people."[46] Another monk has argued that, in the present context of war, it is better to join the army than to join the *sangha*: "In an age where the country and the race is being destroyed it is a greater or more noble deed to enlist them [namely, sons] in the army according to the current need, than to ordain them, said the monk. He said this at a pirit organized by the youth of Puhulwelle for the brave soldiers."[47] Still other monks participate in rituals that are designed to protect the security forces, while one monk, for instance, at a ritual to ensure the protection of combatants, declared in his religious teachings that soldiers deserve the blessings of the *sangha*:

> Minister Ratwatte as a great General had always gone to the battlefront and directed operations during every big military offensive carried out by the armed forces in the North against the brutal terrorists. This is a great act of heroism which will go down in history. With the blessings of the Triple Gem [that is, the Buddha, the dharma, and the *sangha*] there is no doubt of our winning this war in the very near future. We the sangha send out our blessings to those engaged in the war against fascist terrorists.[48]

As these justifications and ratifications of defensive war suggest, given the reality of Sri Lanka's protracted war, some members of the *sangha* endeavor to preserve what they believe in – namely, a unified Sri Lankan state, which might call for war, despite their commitment to non-violence. And these justifications are predicated upon the idea that "truth acts" performed for the country are efficacious and valid. That army personnel seek the awesome power of the Buddha's relic in Kandy, therefore, at the same time that they protect their (entire) country from the LTTE, coheres with the logic of at least one dimension of contemporary Sinhala-Buddhist ideology, which is suffused by the common assumption that monks are to safeguard not only the Buddha's dharma, but his relics – whether bodily or of use – as well.

Moreover, along these lines, it is significant to note that, in Sri Lanka, a politician can hold the portfolios of both Minister of Defense and Minister of the Buddha Sasana (religion) at the same time, which may seem like an irony.[49] Yet, Sri Lanka's textual tradition and Sinhala culture make the case that those who govern are responsible for the maintenance of Buddhism. And, as we have noted throughout this study, the Theravadin canonical ideal of the world conqueror is inextricably

related to the ideal of the world renouncer, which suggests an inherent tension between politics and religion since early on. In such a context, then, it stands to reason that a *satyakriya*, the prerequisite of which is righteousness, can be performed for purposes that presuppose that political action and Buddhism are bound together.

In sum, the performance of *satyakriyas*, albeit in less formal terms than we outlined above, is a significant feature of Buddhist just-war thinking and action in contemporary Sri Lanka. As we have seen repeatedly throughout this study, in the contemporary context, both monks who advocate war alone to quash the LTTE as well as political leaders who propose war for peace, assume the righteousness of their activity over against those whom they demonize. In the demonology that ensues, the truth of the resort to war for the sake of the country or of Buddhism outweighs the harm that is done to the unrighteous. Moreover, in this utilitarian line of thinking, inasmuch as politician and monk alike share the voice of authority in the Sinhala-Buddhist context – which further underscores the tension between the traditional paradigms of world conqueror and world renouncer – the Sinhala-Buddhist just-war criterion of legitimate authority[50] is premised upon the notion that monks can declare a government's war to be a just one, or, for that matter, call for war when they perceive that the dharma is threatened.

John Howard Yoder, a pacifist who has explored just-war thinking, has noted that, in the Christian tradition, "sometimes the question of authority to wage war is confused with that of authority to decide when a war is just."[51] In the case of Buddhist Sri Lanka, there is little confusion; as we saw in Chapter 3, in Sri Lankan Buddhist thought on war, monks assume both the right to declare war and the right to advise politicians on the appropriateness of their actions in regard to war. A recent example of the latter occurred in June 1998 as the Sri Lankan government debated whether or not to hold elections in the context of war. The leader of each of Sri Lanka's monastic fraternities called on the government to "postpone elections till [*sic*] the conclusion of the war,"[52] in effect advising the government to continue its war against separatist Tamils. Arguing that fair elections cannot be held without army protection of voters and politicians in war-torn Sri Lanka, the monks authorized the government's objectives to keep the army in the north until the question of a Tamil homeland is resolved, that is, until the end of the war. According to the monks, "the first priority should be given to the war in order to finish it off and create a peaceful atmosphere in the country so that a just and fair election could be held thereafter."[53] However, these monks are not without their critics. Doubtless finding the monks' insistence on war at odds with Buddhism, at least one commentator in an English-language daily has suggested, in an ironic tone, that:

> Another question that begs an answer is when the *mahanayakas* [heads of the monastic fraternities] will be appointed to the security council to conduct the war against the LTTE. Isn't it time some seats were made ready?[54]

Notwithstanding this criticism of monks and their attitudes toward war, informed lay people, taking as their cue the leading monks' advice to the government to continue with the war, press the government to carry on.

One layman, having summed up, in great detail, the leading monks' position on the war and the postponement of the election, drew attention to what he perceived to be an obligation of the government: "Your bounden duty is to fight terrorism with all the resources at your command and safeguard the territorial integrity of this country. In the circumstances you could only perform your duty by the state by totally crushing this terrorist movement."[55] Another layman, critical of an editorial in an English-language daily that questioned the monks' insistence that the government proceed with the war and postpone the elections, reminded readers:

> The Maha Nayaka theros [head monks] of Malwatte and Asgiriya [seats of one of the three monastic fraternities, the Siyam Nikaya] … have often exhorted the students to eschew violence and cultivate *metta* [loving kindness]: so have the Mahanayaka theros of the other nikayas, *except in circumstances in times when the future of the country and religion are at stake*.[56]

Supporting the rights of monks to advise the government on issues of war, even to be proponents of war – to be legitimate authorities on matters related to war – the advocate of the *sangha* allows for the ethic of loving kindness to be over-ridden in certain situations: namely, in the defense of Sri Lanka and of Buddhism. In short, the monks' advocate presented an argument for Buddhist prima facie duties in contrast to ultimate obligations.

Notwithstanding President Kumaratunga's "war for peace" that we examined in Chapter 2, she is critical of monks who propose that war alone is the only effective means to achieving peace in Sri Lanka; it will be remembered that Kumaratunga advocates a political solution to Sinhala–Tamil conflict, though she has established the precedent for urging negotiations even while her government supports the war. In other words, she holds peace talks and at the same time justifies her war against the LTTE as a last resort. Thus, she is critical of monks, such as the Venerable Sobitha (whom we met in Chapter 2 and whose ideology we shall examine further below), who is quite arguably the most controversial monk in contemporary Sri Lanka on account of to his bellicose orations. His alignment with war has prompted Kumaratunga to "take a swipe at the Buddhist monks in general and Ven. Sobitha Thero in particular. Kumaratunga said that if the monks want war, she would send them to the warfront."[57]

As we saw in Chapter 3, in previous decades, Buddhist monks included in their demonology any anti-Buddhist forces, particularly those that sought to undermine the traditional relationship between Buddhism and governance in Sri Lanka. For instance, just before the 1958 riots, which, as we noted in the same chapter, resulted in one of the most serious Sinhala–Tamil conflicts in the post-

independence period, a Buddhist monk declared that he and his cohorts not only had a right to declare war against forces inimical to Buddhism, but that they had already been successful and would be so again in the future:

> Claiming for the Sangha the credit for the overthrow of the UNP [the United National Party], Talpawila Silawansa Nayaka Thera [a monk] declared that at the next general election the entire Sangha would declare a "Holy War" against the LSSP [Lanka Sama Samaja Party].[58]

Notwithstanding the allusions to holy war, a concept that we explored briefly in Chapter 2 and that we will address in some detail below, the monk describes metaphorical wars against politicians who, for the most part, are presumably Sinhala and presumably Buddhist. Yet they are not, in his view, Buddhist enough. Like present-day monks who argue that, "in the past there were threats from foreign elements, but now the Sinhala community face[s] threats from internal forces," and who "call for unity among the Sinhala community and the Buddhists to safeguard the interests of the Sinhalese,"[59] this 1958 monk reacted to non-Buddhist elements in Sri Lanka, underscoring his own righteousness, and sounding the alarm of war. Along these lines, it is interesting to note that some monks, critical of Kumaratunga's government, particularly since 1994 when Kumaratunga began to garner support for her devolution proposals, have criticized her competence, on occasion arguing that the *sangha* should be given the imprimatur of the state to lead the Sinhala people. For instance, a monk who is a senior lecturer in Pali and Buddhism at the University of Sri Jayewardenapura, the Venerable Meegoda Sri Pannaloka Thera, at a ceremony for distributing certificates to children at a Buddhist school in Ratmalana, made remarks that betray the degree to which the Sinhala *bhumiputra* ideology, linked as it is, in the case of monks, to their awesome roles as defenders of the soil, permeates monastic rhetoric:

> I would wish to demand the handing over of the administration of the country to the Maha Sangha if the government was unable to safeguard the rights of the majority race. They could very well run an administration which would ensure the rights and privileges of the Sinhala people. They [monks] could attend the task in the correct way.[60]

These examples suffice to demonstrate that monks can not only verify a head of state's resort to war, but they themselves can declare war and determine authority – in terms both metaphorical and real – in the Sinhala-Buddhist context. The Venerable Sobitha, an outspoken critic of the PA government's "war for peace" against the LTTE, has claimed publicly that war should be waged in certain contexts. Defending the National Movement against Terrorism (NMT), which, critics claim, is chauvinist, racist, and an anti-Tamil organization, the Venerable Sobitha provided guidelines for determining when a war is just:

> Stressing that the 22 wars Sri Lanka fought since the beginning of documented history have all been in self-defence, Ven. Sobitha cited an instance when King Elara invaded Sri Lanka. "Dutugemunu defended his motherland, does not make him a racist," queried Ven. Sobitha. "If this is so then every battle against foreign invaders is racist."[61]

Invoking the *Mahavamsa* story of a legitimate war to authorize his point of view, the Venerable Sobitha then recounted all the atrocities suffered by Buddhists at the hands of the LTTE, including the massacre of Buddhist nuns as they worshiped at the sacred Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura. At this point, the venerable monk reflected on canonical images to justify his position:

> Even the Buddha spoke strong words as well as good when it was necessary to save people from danger. And if we [are to] save Sri Lanka the thorn of terrorism needs to be plucked out.[62]

Advocating defensive war against forces inimical to Buddhist Sri Lanka, then, the Venerable Sobitha finds justification in the righteous and paradigmatic life of the Buddha, the world renouncer and, as we have seen, in the actions of Dutugemunu, the paradigmatic world conqueror of the epics. Locating virtue in the actions of the Buddha and of Dutugemunu, the Venerable Sobitha engages virtue ethics which, as we saw in Chapter 4, evaluates the moral worth of persons rather than principles.

The Venerable Maduluwawe Sobitha Thera, who has been referred to as the "firy [*sic*] orator and charismatic leader of the Sinhala people,"[63] was not the only notable to address the gathering of the NMT in June 1998. Along with him was Dr A. T. Ariyaratne, whom we met in Chapter 3 in our discussion of *dharma yuddhaya*. It will be recalled that, for Dr Ariyaratne, the only "religious war" is a metaphorical battle against social evils. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that he declared that he was "one hundred per-cent anti-war."[64] Here, it must be pointed out that it is a monk – namely, the Venerable Sobitha, who is aligned with war, while a Buddhist layman is aligned with peace. But this is not surprising. As we saw in Chapter 3, in the course of the 1900s, the potential for violence has shaped Sinhala-Buddhist monastic rhetoric, in which the idea of *dharma yuddhaya* as figurative war has been made concrete and literal to mean defensive war for the sake of Buddhism. In other words, the venerable monk's call to meet terrorism's violence with the state's violence has a remarkably monastic ring about it: the monk evokes scenes from the Buddhist texts – both canonical and post-canonical – and colors his call for war with ideology from monkish treatises. He manipulates scenes from the *Mahavamsa* and of the textual Buddha and urges the Sinhala people to live exactly what it is they read. With his consistent references to Buddhism's stories, the Venerable Sobitha collapses the "then" of the texts into the "now" of Sri Lanka, whose manifest destiny it is to preserve Buddhism, and which has already been homologized with the Buddha himself.

Indeed, within a month of defending the NMT, the Venerable Sobitha stated publicly that defensive wars are legitimate wars. At the birthday celebration of General Ratwatte whom, as we noted in Chapter 2, the Venerable Sobitha has compared to Dutugemunu, the monk delivered a *bana*, a sermon, which justified the government's war against the LTTE as a defensive war; the monk's very presence at the birthday celebration of the war hero, like the *bana* he delivered, was an endorsement of the war as a righteous undertaking:

> The Sinhalese have always fought only to safeguard their security and never for power. Today also it is the same. We are fighting the terrorists today to safeguard the Muslims, Tamils and Sinhalese.[65]

In arguing that all the communities of Sri Lanka would benefit if the LTTE were defeated, the monk proposed an inclusive plan. He continued by contextualizing his justification for defensive war within a historical analysis of Sri Lanka and external threats:

> "If we could have rid this country of the English, the Portuguese and Dutch rule, getting rid of Prabhakaran [the leader of the LTTE] would be peanuts. But in order to do so there must be a commitment," he said. And then, Sobitha thero said, "Anuruddha Ratwatte is one person who can do it."[66]

In his analysis, the internal threat of Prabhakaran and the LTTE, which he regards as a terrorist organization, is considered an easier menace to extricate from the island than the colonial powers that dominated it for a period of some four hundred years. In this tacit critique of the PA government's inability to "root out" the LTTE, the Venerable Sobitha nonetheless advocates that war is the proper means to do so. And, from his point of view, the Buddhist soldier, General Ratwatte, is the man for the job.

If General Ratwatte is the modern-day Dutugemunu, then Prabakaran is the modern-day Elara. The alignment between contemporary military leaders (the LTTE is a paramilitary organization) and ancient warrior kings, such as Dutugemunu and Elara of the epics, the depiction of the political struggle between Dutugemunu and Elara as a Sinhala–Tamil battle,[67] and thus as a battle between those who have a right to Sri Lanka and those who do not (a problem that is resolved in the *Mahavamsa* in favor of Dutugemunu), imbues the Venerable Sobitha's thoughts on war. That pattern of thought is resisted by his critics. Most critics argue that illusions to the *Mahavamsa* demonize all Tamils, and not just the Tamils of the LTTE. One critic muses that the venerable monk's insistence that Sri Lanka has a terrorist problem, and not an ethnic problem, presents obstacles to a peace package that would grant Tamils in the north a certain amount of autonomy.[68] He or she argues that the formation of the LTTE is the outcome of decades of injustices toward Tamils, including violence perpetrated against them

in 1958 and 1983 (see Chapter 3 for more on these events); moreover, the presumably Sinhala critic of Venerable Sobitha, like other Sinhala moderates, proposes that Tamils, as well as each of Sri Lanka's ethnic communities, can legitimately share the island with the Sinhalas.

The Venerable Sobitha, along with laymen who share his point of view, are cognizant that many Sri Lankans are critical of their ideas. While the government is said to be formulating a peace package that they hope will be acceptable to the LTTE, the Venerable Sobitha and others clamor for their own "package" – a tongue-in-cheek reference to the government's proposals for the LTTE – that will protect the rights of the Sinhala Buddhists.

Instead, the *Sinhala Commission Report* was published in 1998 which, as we noted in Chapter 2, is a response to the PA government's plan for peace. The report, a "devastating criticism of the devolution package":

> has made the Sinhala people fully aware for the first time of the enormity of the injustices caused to them by the white men who forcibly intruded into their country and brought destruction on a peaceful people who only wanted to be left alone to conduct their lives according to their ancient customs and religion.[69]

Reviving one trope of the Sinhala as peace loving and traditional, the *Sinhala Commission Report* juxtaposes the pacific Buddhist to the intruders, in this case, the Christian European. And in addition to enumerating injustices to the Sinhala people and their religion, specifically underscoring economic deprivations due to colonial rule, the report calls upon the Sinhalas to "further and advance the cause of the Sinhala people and the nation," which includes adopting the Buddhist social philosophy of the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*.[70] The report, which incorporates teachings from the Buddhist texts, including the allegedly final discourse of the Buddha, also "call[s] upon the Sinhala people not to vote for and reject any party that is in alliance with or is secretly or openly supporting the CWC," that is, the Ceylon Workers Union, because it, along with the LTTE, "is advocating separatism in this country."[71]

The Venerable Sobitha, too, warned Sinhalas of the dangers of the CWC. Like the authors of the *Sinhala Commission Report* – indeed, he was involved in its evolution – the Venerable Sobitha argues that the CWC leader, Minister of Estates, S. Thondaman, a Tamil, is trying to establish a homeland for Tamils, who were brought from India by the British to pluck tea, in the area of Sri Lanka that is populated by stateless Tamil workers.[72] With the specter of two Tamil homelands on the horizon, Eelam in the north,[73] and "Malayanadu" in the hill-country – so named by the Venerable Sobitha ("Malaya" is a reference to the south Indian origin of the Tamils in question, and "Nadu" is the Tamil word for 'state") – the integrity of Sri Lanka is jeopardized. Exemplifying the discourse of Sri Lanka as both topocosm and relic of use, the venerable monk's ideology provides justifications for war against the Tamils.

At the same time, however, both the Venerable Sobitha and Dr Piyasena Dissanayaka, the secretary of the committee that published the *Sinhala Commission Report*, argue that "there is not a war in Sri Lanka against the Tamil community but the terrorists."[74] Yet, the LTTE is solely a Tamil organization. And given that, as we have seen, contemporary Tamils are often homologized with the island's enemies, eventually conquered by Dutugemunu – a righteous Buddhist who represents a glorious Sinhala past – the consequences of labeling Sri Lanka's problems as "terrorist" rather than "ethnic" are dire for the entire Tamil population; as this study has repeatedly suggested, the demonization of Tamils is a preliminary step in Sinhala-Buddhist justifications for violence against them. This is not to dismiss the charge that the LTTE engages in terrorism. Instead, given the use of religious narratives that idealize a past in which Sinhalas have been victorious over usurping Tamils, the claim that Tamils are terrorists opens the door for a movement away from just-war thinking toward something more akin to holy war, that is, toward offensive war without limits (and without proper authority), a category of war to which this study shall now turn.

Religious wars, holy wars and just wars: the Sri Lankan case

It is significant that the "Sinhala Commission [Report] was presented to the Mahanayake Thera's [*sic*] of the three Nikayas at the Dalada Maligawa,"[75] which houses the sacred Tooth Relic. As we have seen in this chapter, the Tooth Relic is considered to be an instantiation of the living presence of the Buddha. By extension, the presentation of the report to the monks in the Temple of the Tooth amounts to a presentation to the Buddha himself. This ritual act, therefore, lends religious legitimation to the content of the report. Moreover, the report was directly approved by the leading monks, who received it on behalf of the Buddha, one of whom remarked that "the proposals should be looked into by everyone." In essence, using religious idioms and with the sanction of prominent monks, the *Sinhala Commission Report*, like the NMT's document to the Indian prime minister, justifies the self-defense of the Sinhala-Buddhist people, a theme that we have traced throughout twentieth-century Sinhala-Buddhist rhetoric. That rhetoric, moreover, as we have come to expect, is based on interpretations of the *Mahavamsa*, the fifth-century chronicle of kingly exploits, including those of Dutugemunu, the Buddhist warrior king. It must also be stressed, however, that, in addition to Minister Samaraweera, there have been other vocal critics of the *Sinhala Commission Report*, including feminists in Sri Lanka who are responsible for the controversial "Cat's Eye" editorial in a local paper. In response to the publication of the report, Cat's Eye contended that "those who want to make Buddhism into a parochial religion, must be reminded that some of the best literary works in Tamil are Buddhist, the Sillapadikaram and Mannimekalai for example, and that Buddhagosa [who represents the commentarial tradition], himself was a South Indian. Buddhism belongs to the world, not to any particular race or ethnic

group." Thus, while some in Sri Lanka, such as those responsible for the report, align Buddhism with the Sinhala people, others construct it as a world religion. Indeed, those who proclaim that Buddhism transcends ethnic distinctions and geographical boundaries comprise the very segment of Sri Lanka's Buddhist population that resists the just-war thinking that is ratified by Sinhala Buddhism.

Despite resistance, such as that of Cat's Eye, to the parochial quality of Sri Lankan thinking on Buddhism in contemporary Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan Buddhism – both in texts and contexts – underwrites war if certain conditions are met. For instance, we have seen that, if we view the *Mahavamsa's* narrative of the Dutugemunu–Elara conflict through the lens of traditional Western just-war thinking, there are textual foundations for just-war thinking in Sri Lanka; the conflict can be read as a just war. As we noted, both the *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum* criteria were, for the most part, met in the *Mahavamsa's* depiction of the war. It will be remembered that Dutugemunu's "just cause" is "to bring glory to the dharma," that is, to defend his religion. The righteousness of his act is underscored in a variety of ways, as we have seen, not the least of which is the manipulation of auspicious numbers. It is, for instance, a curious fact of the *Mahavamsa* that Dutugemunu, with his mother as his counsel,[76] "formed thirty-two bodies of troops" (XXV.55–6). As is well known, "There is some reason for thinking that the number thirty-two connotes completion and fulfilment in Buddhist thought: the body is described as consisting of thirty-two parts; the Great Man [that is, the world conqueror and the world renouncer] has a body with thirty-two marks."[77] It can reasonably be argued, therefore, that, according to the monk editor of the *Mahavamsa*, Dutugemunu fought not only a just war, but a perfect war, as well.

The justice of Sri Lanka's present war, rendered legitimate by religious texts, is assumed by monks and politicians alike, as we have seen throughout this study. The justice of the war is also the subject of soldiers' reflections upon their own participation in the contemporary conflict. For instance, Corporal K. G. Sirisena published a poem in the twenty-fifth anniversary commemorative volume of his regiment, significantly, the Gemunu Watch, that justifies his own involvement in the war and traces his military genealogy back to many of Sri Lanka's heroes in the *vamsas*. In his poem, "Our own nation's people are against us," a reference to the belligerence of the Tamils, Sirisena writes: "The works of our forefathers steeped in tradition / Have been marked in history / The blood of those who showed their might / By reaping harvests from the waters of the land / Still run deeply in our veins." Drawing parallels between the soldiers of his day and the warriors of Sri Lanka's glorious days, Sirisena's emotional poem enlivens the actions of those who have also protected the island: "Tears of joy pour forth when I see in my mind's eye / The mighty deeds of great heroes of yore / Like Mahasena, Dutugemunu, and Surasena / Who fought valiantly for our country." Sirisena understands his bravery to be a result of his Sinhala ethnicity, a metaphorical substance that makes him heroic and connects him to Dutugemunu and the others: "I believe that the blood flowing in me / Is the same that ran through mighty

heroes." Claiming that the protection of the island is "… a duty of ours, who have been nurtured through the years / By milk from the blood of Queen Vihara Maha Devi and Soma Devi / Who have done much for our country and for Buddhism / To protect our precious motherland,"[78] the corporal defends the justice of his war by alluding to the pious mother of Dutugemunu, who, tradition claims, counseled her son in his war against Elara. Homologizing Dutugemunu's war with the present civil war in Sri Lanka, particularly the defense of Buddhism, Sirisena thus makes his case for just cause (against the Tamils).

Yet, defense of religion, or the *Mahavamsa's* criterion of just cause for war, is often examined by just-war specialists in terms of its role as a feature of *holy*, rather than of *just*, war. Indeed, as James Turner Johnson has remarked, "the main line of just war tradition has rejected religion (and implicitly ideology) as a justifying cause for war."[79] However, as noted in Chapter 1, the Western just-war tradition to which Johnson refers is one outcome of the development of the secular nation-state in Christian Europe. And, as we saw in that chapter, in the case of Sri Lanka we are dealing with an entirely different relationship between religion and the "state," whether we are discussing the pre- or (much of the) post-colonial periods. That is to say, the relationship between religion and rule in Sri Lanka has maintained its symbiosis to the present day, unlike the situation in modern Europe. Despite the idea in scholarship that war for religion constitutes holy war,[80] then, the Sri Lankan material thus presents a different picture – namely, that in societies in which religion and politics are fused in both theory and practice, defense of religion can constitute a just war if certain standards are met.

As we saw in Chapter 2, even in the rhetoric of war of the Western-style, Sri Lankan secularist, President Kumaratunga, war is linked to Buddhism. To illustrate further, in 1998, Kumaratunga averred that, while "the war, a legacy from the previous regime, will be continued along with the peace process," she and her government had "allocated an unprecedented quantum of funds for the uplift of the Buddha Sasana [religion] over the last four years."[81] Indeed, it can be argued that Kumaratunga's protection of Buddhism enlivens an ancient Buddhist literary trope of Buddhist merit-making activities, which we noted in Chapter 2: it will be recalled that the *Mahavamsa's* Dutugemunu engaged in merit-making activities after his victory over Elara. As van der Horst has pointed out, and as we saw in Chapter 2, merit making and violence are connected in modern-day Sri Lanka: in the 1980s President Premadasa increased his merit-making activities as his government's involvement in wars against the LTTE and the JVP escalated. And in the late 1990s, as Kumaratunga's government has continued to "wage war against terrorists," it has earmarked millions of rupees for the maintenance of ancient Buddhist sites. In fact, Sri Lanka's unique form of secularism and the ongoing war in Sri Lanka have compelled Kumaratunga and other political leaders, like the ancient kings of the *Mahavamsa*, to seek merit-fields, particularly during periods in which war has required them to commit demeritorious acts, despite what they feel to be the justified nature of such acts. In drawing a connection between her support of war and her support of Buddhism, Kumaratunga herself

invokes the ancient image of the sovereign who is at once the protector of the religion and of the nation, no matter how much that role might entail calling for war to protect the island of the dharma.

Despite the well-imbedded assumption about the protection of *dharmadwipa*, we noted in Chapters 1 and 4 that it is a common notion in scholarship and "on the ground," so to speak, that Buddhism never admits to war for any reason. An interesting irony and counterbalance to this claim is that, in some writings on Sri Lanka and other Theravadin Buddhist countries, a few scholars, particularly those who, like me, are interested in the reasons behind Sri Lanka's continuing conflict, advance the idea that it is one result of a Buddhist holy-war ideology. In other words, common wisdom about Sri Lanka and war is polarized; some characterize Sri Lankan Buddhism as being the paradigmatic ultra-pacific religion, while others talk of Sri Lankan Buddhism and its holy-war ideology. The middle ground between the poles – the idea of Buddhist just war – is uncharted territory. Indeed, from the various presentations of Sri Lankan Buddhism, whether local or international, one is confronted with a picture of Sinhala history as either excessively belligerent or sublimely pacific. In fact, it can be argued that Sri Lanka represents the process whereby "competing histories have been flattened into a stereotype," only to be "split into two opposing elements," a point that Donald Lopez makes about Tibet, another Buddhist field of enquiry.[82] In his study of the Western encounter of Tibetan Buddhism, Lopez delineates the process whereby Tibetan Buddhism may be portrayed as both the most authentic and the most degenerate form of Buddhism and how language about Tibet "not only creates knowledge about Tibet, [but] in many ways creates Tibet."[83] This much is true of Sri Lanka, for which scholarship has constructed a Sri Lanka that is heir to a continual play of dichotomies and polar opposites.

But the polarization which is the result of, and which reinforces, the flattened stereotypes of Sri Lankan Buddhism, is to be expected. Given the prevalence of Buddhist rhetoric that suffuses contemporary Sri Lankan discourse on the war in Sri Lanka, and in other events in the histories of Southeast Asian countries, commentators draw the conclusion that war for the dharma (and all that Buddhism entails) is holy war, rather than an expression of just-war ideology, Buddhist style, the primary focus of this book. In the academic study of religious ethics, in which a technical vocabulary, such as "just war" and "holy war," is used to describe and assess legitimate relationships between conflict, ideology, and practice, any conflation of the categories of war, such as "just" and "holy," is resisted. Yet, for others, such modifiers are used with different precision. This is especially true of commentators on South and Southeast Asia who write in English, for their vocabulary of war is inextricably tied to Christian concepts, due in part to the long history of Christian writings in English on war. Moreover, I would assume that most non-specialists of war, and those of us who are not politically active, are far more familiar with the expression, and instances, of holy war than of just war. In fact, I would venture to say that, for the non-specialist ethicist, the category of holy war – given how embedded it is in Western consciousness as a result of

Biblical history – rather than of just war, is the lens through which most of us view wars with a religious dimension. It is probably also the case that most of us are not aware of a distinction between the two ideal types. In short, as James Turner Johnson has pointed out more generally, the conflation of just war and holy war is a prominent feature in writings on war.[84]

This is as true of the Asian context as it is of Europe and the Americas. For instance, Stanley Tambiah, in a lively debate with Melford Spiro soon after the former's *World Conqueror, World Renouncer* appeared, mentioned, in a footnote, that Buddhist kings who fashioned themselves along the lines of the mythical *cakkavatti* of the texts (see Chapter 2 of this study), reinterpreted the "Asokan concept of non-violent conquest by dharma … as acts of warlike conquest to defend and preserve Buddhism." Tambiah continued by commenting on this activity – namely, *dharma-vijaya* (conquering through religion), particularly as it appeared in Southeast Asia: "In this guise the concept of *dharma-vijaya* bears some resemblance to the Islamic notion of 'holy war.' "[85] Indeed, there are some parallels that can be drawn between Islamic and Buddhist constructs of war, inasmuch as both religions assume that war for religion is justified. As we have seen throughout this study, however, the Theravadin Buddhist situation, at least in Sri Lanka – where the idea of the *cakkavatti* continues to resonate to the present – proclaims, in texts and contexts, an intricate ideology of war with limits, that is, it affirms a fundamental distinction between just war and holy war. We must also note that Tambiah, moreover, was commenting on the Southeast Asian situation. Yet, given that the idea of the *cakkavatti* is common to both the South and the Southeast Asian Buddhist experience, we can assume that the implication of holy war extends to the larger Theravadin region. Holy wars, such as in the Christian and Muslim contexts, however, are fought for God.

Kumari Jayawardena, in a 1985 work upon which I have relied in this study, also draws our attention to the idea of holy war as she explores ethnicity and class in Sri Lanka. In the second page of her discussion, she remarks that "appeals to save Buddhism from the 'infidels' or non-Buddhists are resorted to and in recent years, calls for '*dharma yudhaya*' (holy war) to protect Buddhist monuments and to preserve the Buddhist religion have been made."[86] In her parenthetical gloss of *dharma yudhaya*, an expression that we explored in Chapter 3 of this study, Jayawardena invokes offensive religious war without limits. Jayawardena's translation of *dharma yudhaya* as holy war is picked up by Tambiah, who quotes her in full, to underscore the violent nature of the contemporary Sinhala–Tamil conflict and its religious dimension.[87] Yet, in a translation of a Sinhala newspaper passage as she explores Sinhala boycotting of Malayali-owned businesses in the 1930s, Jayawardena highlights the Sinhala-Buddhist ideology of *dharma yudhaya* and relates it to non-violence: "We [Sinhalas] should think of ways in which we can make our struggle triumph through non-violent means, through a holy war (*dharma yuddaya*)."[88] As we saw in Chapter 2, non-violent boycotting – a Sinhala tactic that has been used since at least the late nineteenth century – is a precursor to the type of Buddhist thinking on war that we have been analyzing in this study.

In other words, as we saw in Chapter 3, Sinhala economic boycotting of Tamils and Muslims is imbued with an ideology that promotes the notion that the island of Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalas who are Buddhist. While it is true, and I think that this is the point that Jayawardena makes, that non-violent boycotting can lead to violence – as we saw in Chapter 3, the 1983 conflict is a very dramatic case in point – choosing not to buy goods from non-Sinhalas is different from the technical prerequisites that ethicists inform us constitute holy war. Yet, as with Tambiah, Jayawardena underscores the way that religion justifies ethical behavior in the Theravadin Buddhist context, including the use of violence.

Sinhala violence against Tamils, the most notable example of which is "July 1983," as it is now known, has prompted another Sri Lankan commentator, Asanga Tilakaratne, head of the Department of Buddhist Philosophy in the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies (in Colombo), to remark that "the Sinhala Buddhist nationalists are … opposed to any attempt to solve the ethnic problem by peaceful means; and they call for a 'holy war' against Tamils."[89] Tilakaratne's point, which he reiterated in a conversation that I had with him in 1998, obviously is that Sinhala Buddhists use religion to justify their violence against, even their war with, Tamils; it was not to clarify the difference between holy wars and just wars vis-à-vis Buddhism. Yet, invocation of holy war in the Sinhala-Buddhist context does little to further our understanding of the Theravadin understanding of conflict.

Tilakaratne's views on Buddhism as it has developed in Sri Lanka, and its relationship to contemporary Buddhist ideology on war are nonetheless of importance to this study: according to Tilakaratne in a (published) 1994 speech, "the Sangha still functions within … an age-old and historically inherited psychological framework." This framework is twofold: "the monk became the *kuladevata* (the guardian angel of the family) and on the other hand, he became the protector of the teaching of the Buddha." To understand the full import of Tilakaratne's views, we must keep in mind that the *Mahavamsa* had declared an awesome role for the Sinhala people: according to Tilakaratne, the Buddha's "dispensation would be firmly rooted in [Sri Lanka] and … the people of [Sri Lanka] were going to protect it;" monks, above all, Tilakaratne argues, have internalized this awesome role and have justified war, when necessary, as part of their duty to the Buddha's teachings:

> With the passing of time, in particular with the European colonization of the country and the arrival of new religions, the list of the possible sources of mistrust and fear has increased. With the Tamil demand for a separate country within Sri Lanka and their massacre of the members of the Buddhist Sangha [order of Buddhist monks] and destruction of viharas [temples], the historically continued fear and mistrust have re-emerged with an enhanced force. Therefore the anti-Tamil sentiment of some members of the Sangha and their approval of war do not actually constitute a betrayal of Buddhism as it has evolved in Sri Lanka.[90]

Here, responding to the controversy over Tambiah's 1992 opus (see Chapter 1 of this study), Tilakaratne supports a thesis of this book, that is, that the specific form of Buddhism that we find in Sri Lanka today, itself a response to a variety of "historical" exigencies, justifies war in defense of the dharma. Along these lines, moreover, it is worth noting that, if Sri Lankans had not been colonized and had not, therefore, had to search for an "authentic" identity, it is unlikely that the role of "tradition" and "Buddhist values" would be as marked in contemporary rhetoric.

Non-Sri Lankans who write about Sri Lanka also have highlighted Buddhist justifications for violence and war, couching those justifications in the non-technical idea of holy war. For instance, Edmund Leach, a pioneer in the study of Sinhala–Tamil relations, in 1973 wrote that "the Holy War which defends the Buddhist Sangha [monastic order] against Hindu-Tamil encroachment is the most basic of all Sinhalese nationalist traditions."[91] Indeed, Leach has isolated an important feature of contemporary Sinhala thinking, particularly as it pertains to the Tamil. Yet, Leach's conclusion – that the Sinhala impulse to ward off the Tamil is akin to holy war – is perhaps best understood as a reflection of the tendency to assume that all wars with a religious dimension are holy ones.

My intention here has not been to entangle us in a semantic knot over the distinction between holy wars and just wars. Rather, I have attempted to demonstrate that the Buddhist context of Sri Lanka suggests that the poles of pacifism and holy war, which punctuate two ends of one spectrum of ethical orientations to conflict, are mediated by a Buddhist just-war thinking, particularly as it has manifested itself in twentieth-century Sri Lanka. For, in the Sri Lankan context, at least in the English-speaking Buddhist community, the idea of justified war for religion has been recorded since the late nineteenth century, particularly in the English-medium journal, *The Buddhist*, which we studied in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. In the 1880s, for instance, a period in which, as we saw in Chapter 4, Buddhists examined their own religion from within, which often led to critiques of other traditions, a discussion of caste revealed one contributor's ideas about war:

> In the building of a tank or in other irrigation works all castes have often joined, each contributing its respective share of work; and in the wars with the Tamils no question of caste was ever raised, but all fought side by side like brothers.[92]

The contributor continued by adding that "it is certainly true that our Lord [the Buddha] never observed caste distinctions, nor do the priests at the present day, with the exception of one sect." It is interesting that, in this indictment against caste prejudice, the liminal quality of war against the Tamils is used as a metaphor for Sinhala brotherly love.

An 1889 contributor to *The Buddhist* directly engaged the concept of religious war as he extolled the beauty of the Ruwanveli *cetiya*, a relic chamber allegedly built by King Dutugemunu:

> When King Dutugamunu [*sic*], after his *religious wars* with the vandals of Ellala [that is, Elara] and his hosts, conceived the idea of building up a shrine to commemorate his victory, and to expiate as it were the sins of the numberless victims whose blood was shed on the battle-field, he perceived the difficulty of pouring the materials for its completion.[93]

Having discussed the reasons for the construction of the *cetiya* – namely, victory in religious war and the king's remorse at having killed, the contributor alludes to the war's justified nature by commenting on the righteousness of Dutugemunu: "It is said that the piety of [the] monarch was such that the very guardian gods of Anuradhapura, caused great heaps of gold dust and bricks to appear in the jungles close by the city"[94] in the course of building the relic chamber. In this 1889 description of Dutugemunu's victory, the justice of the war – here deemed religious – is underscored by the participation of deities in the building of a commemorative reliquary to mark Dutugemunu's violent success.

While Dutugemunu's religious war was a source of pride in early editions of *The Buddhist*, Christianity's violent history, as we saw in Chapter 4, was a source of derision. For instance, in an 1892 article, the subtext of which was the supremacy of Buddhism, the editor of *The Buddhist* castigated Christianity for its bloody campaigns:

> The cloak of Christianity served in the past ages to cover a multitude of sins notably the Inquisition and the Crusades, misnamed the Holy Wars. … it was the mistaken sense of duty which hurried on the Popes to sanction torture, flames and the racks in the name of Jesus.[95]

The editor, A. E. Buultjens, whom we met in Chapter 1, was quick to point out that the spirit of the Christian holy wars pervades the present: "But whatever excuse there might have been for the persecution of the Dark Ages, what palliation can condone the secret wills and traps laid in the enlightened nineteenth century to capture and traffic in poor, gentle-hearted, Buddhist, Mohammedan and Hindu children?"[96] For Buultjens, war for religion is a relic of an unenlightened past. Moreover, in this late-nineteenth-century instance of comparative missiology, Christian holy wars are evidence of the debased condition of the religion. Thus, as the articles in early issues of *The Buddhist* suggest, how Sri Lankans view religion and war depends on the context. One hundred years later, we find that Sri Lankan rhetoric on war and religion continues to yield evidence that Buddhists frame their discussions with a type of ethical particularism that can condemn or condone war, depending on the context.

Moreover, in the present, those who directly involve themselves in discussion of Sri Lanka's ongoing ethnic conflict, often do so by framing their discussions with the technical vocabulary of just-war criteria and of holy war. A survey of

reflections upon "July 1983" (see Chapter 3) suggests as much. For, every July since the 1983 troubles, which fueled the great Tamil exodus from Sri Lanka, the newspapers have teemed with discussions about, and reflections upon, Sinhala–Tamil relations in Sri Lanka. In them, at least in the English-language media, the rhetoric and vocabulary of just war appears, often directly and, sometimes, indirectly. In one representative anonymous essay, a critic of Kumaratunga discusses the peace package and assesses its efficacy in what are now familiar terms:

> The war undertaken by Kumaratunga herself was justified on the basis that it would weaken the Tigers [i.e., the LTTE] to a point where the peace package could be implemented. As such it was a "war for peace" and was described as a "just war." But now that the devolution package seems a mere mirage, the basis of the justification for the war itself is seriously eroded.[97]

Drawing a direct connection between right intention – that is, the just-war criterion that "the only valid objective intention is the restoration of peace,"[98] delineated in (Christian thinking and in) international law – and the justice of the war, Kumaratunga's critic finds that the goal of the allegedly "just war" has not been achieved. Moreover, underscoring the tension between war and peace that we have noted throughout this study, the critic claims that "the wheel has turned full cycle and the one time angel of peace [Kumaratunga] is now goddess of war."[99] Moreover, like most local editorials on the war, here, discussion of religion takes center stage: the critic betrays his or her own notion about appropriate behavior of monks and Buddhism's alleged insistence on an ultimate obligation, rather than a prima facie duty, to pacifism:

> The prelates, whose lofty concern should be on preserving the pristine purity of Theravada Buddhism, have been instead promoting the prosecution of the war to its logical conclusion. The precepts and tenets of Buddhism are not to be followed. In this respect – or so it seems to the average Tamil. Of course, the *mahanayakas* [chief monks] have modified their statement saying that they are not advocating genocide. Thank God for these small mercies![100]

From the critic's point of view, both the PA government's allegedly just war against the LTTE, as well as the monks' support of it, are questionable and, moreover, "foreboding of impending doom," such as a repeat of the 1983 violence against Tamils. In other words, the critic is well aware that, in the Sri Lankan context, justification of war by resort to religious ideology has had perilous results for Sri Lanka's Tamil population.

Religion as weapon

Though, as we have noted repeatedly, Sri Lankan commentators often allude to religious stories, or shroud their justifications for violence and war in religious rhetoric as they discuss the war in their country, only recently have Sinhalas accused Tamils of introducing a religious dimension to the conflict. For instance, the National Movement Against Terrorism (see above), in an open letter to the prime minister of India which was published in the Sri Lankan newspapers, has formulated an equation in which Sinhalas allow religious freedom while Tamils persecute Buddhists:

> the Tamil separatist racists, in order to trigger clashes between the Buddhists and the Hindus have destroyed 261 Buddhist places of worship in the north and east. Tamil terrorists have attacked the two most sacred, the most revered pinnacles of Buddhist worship in Sri Lanka, the Sri Lanka Maha Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura and the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy.

In the equation, moreover, the entire island of Sri Lanka, dotted by Buddhist places of worship, rightfully belongs to the Sinhalas:

> The existence of Buddhistic ruins and places of worship in all parts of the country, including Jaffna, Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya is evidence of the fact that this culture and civilisation evolved as a homogeneous whole. Yet the Buddhists of Sri Lanka have never impeded Hindu worship in this country. … no Hindu kovil [shrine], no Hindu procession and no Hindu person has been attacked as a reprisal for these brutal attacks on the Sinhala citizens of Colombo.[101]

In this rhetoric of Sri Lanka as relic of the Buddha, articulated in the claim to three cities that are predominantly Tamil, the NMT betrays the degree to which it subscribes to *Mahavamsa* thinking on the island's purpose. According to the NMT, moreover:

> Tamil racist propagandists distort the truth and invent a so-called clash between the Sinhalese and the Tamils and the Buddhists and the Hindus in order to conceal their real objective – the conspiracy to establish a separate Dravidanstan [an allusion to the Tamils' Dravidian linguistic heritage] within the Indian Republic and in Sri Lanka for the Tamils dispersed around the world.[102]

The NMT, accusing some Tamils of racism – an allegation all too frequently lodged against itself – condemns separatist Tamils for cloaking their real goal in a religious mantle. In other words, the predominantly Sinhala organization denounces Tamil separatists for exploiting religion in its war for a homeland and

for its recent religious war against Buddhism, notwithstanding Sinhala-Buddhist manipulation of religious stories to justify war against the Tamils, as we have seen throughout this study. Moreover, with the specter looming on the horizon of an independent Tamil homeland, carved out of both India and Sri Lanka, the NMT asks the Sinhalas, who are bound to the entire island, to use their political authority to protect Buddhism and country from the Tamils: "Can we Sinhalese stand by and watch in silence and let this happen?" The discourse of the NMT on Tamils (despite the participation in the organization of pacifists such as Dr Ariyaratne), NMT coverage in the English and Sinhala media, and the participation of many Buddhist notables in the NMT, including powerful monks, suggests the degree to which anti-Tamil invectives imbue the dominant public consciousness in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the NMT justifies its call to action, to defend both religion and country, by appealing to the Sinhala people's rights to the entire island, a trope of Sinhala rhetoric throughout the twentieth century, as we noted in Chapter 3. In short, Sinhala Buddhists can only imagine that the Tamil people are interlopers on their sacred Buddhist island because they have been so molded by the "dominant fiction"[103] of Sinhala–Tamil relations, based on *vamsa* literature and reinforced by monkish and political rhetoric, that their culture maintains.

Final thoughts and reflections

The NMT critique of Tamil disregard for Buddhism is shared by independent commentators on the war in Sri Lanka. One commentator alleges that it was the Tamils who were first to manipulate religion for their own gain:

> The Tamil Tiger terrorists blatant disregard for the Buddhist religion is amply highlighted by their actions of gunning down pilgrims engaged in prayer. … By killing Buddhist pilgrims in a venerated site, the Tamil Tiger Terrorists sought to introduce a new dimension to this conflict – religion.[104]

Though the commentator does not argue that Tamils justify their position with religious texts, the idea of religious war with its foundation in Hinduism, rather than Buddhism, is also prevalent in contemporary Sri Lankan discourse. For instance, a presumably Sinhala writer, B. D. Perera, in a 1998 reflection upon the deaths of Sinhalas in Sri Lanka's ongoing war, bemoaned the use of the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita* – with its story about two families warring against each other with ostensible religious justification – to legitimate the war between Sinhalas and Tamils:

> This ancient scripture more than 3,000 years old is accepted to contain concepts of Hinduism. It is a pity, some people misquote [it] in relation to the present ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

Perera concludes his editorial by arguing that, while the text should not be used to justify war, there is a lesson to be learned through study of one of its characters – namely, "Thuriothanan," who, according to Perera's reading of the *Gita*, fought "for personal glorification." Perera then compares Thuriothanan to contemporary Sri Lankan politicians, who, for their own glory, Perera alleges, allow Sinhalas to die: "Compare in Sri Lanka Sinhala youth sacrificing their life and limb for the glorification of party politicians!"[105]

Perera's critique of the manipulation of a Hindu text to justify war in Sri Lanka is not shared by Lakshman Kadirgamar, the (Tamil Christian) Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 1998, at a ceremony marking the graduation of cadets from Sri Lanka's military academy, Kadirgamar, whom we met in Chapter 1, remarked that he had been "reminded this morning of the famous words of wisdom that have come down to us through the ages from the celebrated discourse between Arjuna and Lord Krishna, as expounded in the Bhagavad Gita." Reflecting upon Arjuna, the hero of the Hindu text, who "contemplated fleeing the field of battle," Kadirgamar underscored Arjuna's religious and social duty to fight:

> He asked the Lord Krishna, his divine charioteer, for advice. The Lord Krishna said to him, "It is a noble duty for a warrior to fight a just war." Arjuna should not grieve. He should protect righteousness. His bounded duty was to maintain law and order. He should not waver, for there is nothing greater for a warrior than to answer the call of duty.[106]

Alleging that Arjuna had to fight a "just war," Kadirgamar connected the classical Hindu text to modern international thinking on conflict. Like Kumaratunga, who, as we saw in Chapter 2, provides her constituents with what they want to hear, that is, religious stories that justify her government's position on the war, Kadirgamar appeals to young cadets with religious stories that are conceived as if their validity were obvious and natural. As we have noted throughout this study, religious stories are used in contemporary Sri Lanka to justify ethical positions on war, and Kadirgamar's reflections on the *Gita* are no exception. Indeed, inasmuch as Kadirgamar's point about Arjuna, as we saw in Chapter 1, was made in the context of a speech that incorporated allusions to international just-war criteria (including the protection of non-combatants and just cause), there is no question that religious stories continue to be sites in which Sri Lankans debate ethical theories about war, Buddhist or not.

Like Kadirgamar and Kumaratunga, the other notables that we have met in this study frame their ideology about war with religious stories and narratives, some from the Pali canon, others from the post-canonical *vamsas*. While some use the stories to legitimate their deontological stance on war, others, as we have seen, rely on them to provide evidence for utilitarianism, while still others frame their thinking on war with virtue ethics based on images of important Buddhists in the texts. Indeed, this study of Buddhist narratives and their relationship to ethical thinking on war suggests that attention to stories often reveals ethical

positions that are significantly different from those that emerge from strictly philosophical doctrines, the object of concern of most scholars of Buddhism. Or, as Charles Hallisey and Anne Hansen have theorized,

> modern students of Buddhism do not learn as much as they could from Buddhist narratives. In particular, they rarely attend to the imaginative insights that narratives can provide about the complex experiences common in Buddhist life, even though Buddhist insights are often surprisingly informative in this regard, yielding insights which go against the grain of what we might otherwise expect on the basis of the abstract doctrines.[107]

In fact, the evidence presented in this book suggests that Sinhala-Buddhist culture authorizes efflorescences of just-war thinking, based on Buddhist narratives, despite doctrines that urge pacifism. Any attempt at an understanding of contemporary Sri Lanka must come to terms with this material fact. It must also appreciate that the legacies of pain and suffering, on the one hand, and ethical orientations, on the other, that the Sinhala–Tamil war have left behind, are fashioning, and are fashioned by, Sinhala Buddhism. Though here I have focused on Sinhala-Buddhist justifications for war against forces inimical to Buddhism, including the LTTE, it must be remembered that "the LTTE is credited, or debited, with killing more of their own than any other, including the Sri Lankan army."[108] So, while this study has endeavored to illuminate the thinking that allows for Sinhala Buddhists to justify war in certain situations, it has not explored the LTTE's manipulation of religious stories that allows for Hindu-based just-war thinking. That study I leave undone. Yet, I encourage the exploration of the different venues, including the Internet, that have allowed the LTTE to justify its position over the past few decades by invoking religious narratives. After all, it may just be the critical recovery of this "past" – captured in both Sinhala and Tamil religious stories – that allows for redemption in Sri Lanka's future.[109]

NOTES

1 NARRATIVE, ETHICS, AND WAR

1 Portions of this chapter appeared in T. Bartholomeusz, "In defense of dharma: Just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics,* 6 (1999): 1–16, and are reproduced here with permission.

2 W. V. O'Brien, "The International Law of War as related to the Western just war tradition," in J. Kelsay and J. T. Johnson (eds), *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991, pp. 163–75; J. T. Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

3 A. E. Mayer, "War and peace in the Islamic tradition and International Law," in J. Kelsay and J. T. Johnson (eds), *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions,* pp. 198–200.

4 Dr C. F. Amerasinghe, "South Asia as a breeding ground for International Law," *The Daily News* (Colombo), 25 June 1997.

5 A. E. Buultjens, "The Ceylon Government and the Buddhists," *The Buddhist*, IV, 33 (19 August 1892): 260.

6 For example, after the bomb blast in the Galadari Hotel, Colombo, an advertisement appeared in *The Island* (Colombo), 19 October 1997, for a bomb suppresser, with the guarantee that "Blast damage is reduced by 90%, Fragmentation damage by 90% and virtually eliminates fire risk."

7 For more on non-combatants, see "Govt will not tolerate human rights violations," *The Daily News*, 9 August 1997; and "Danger of break-up," *The Island*, 31 August 1997.

8 "Fostering racial amity–prime task for the Army" (speech delivered by Lakshman Kadirgamar), *The Daily News*, 24 June 1998.

9 Lakshman Kadirgamar, one of the only Tamils in Chandrika Kumaratunga's cabinet, is a Christian.

10 *Meet the Press*, NBC, 28 March 1999.

11 *Republican presidential debate*, CNN, 15 February 2000.

12 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*, Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982, p. 77.

13 *Crossfire,* CNN, 8 April 1999.

14 "Choices/consequences: A call to courage with conviction," speech given by the Reverend Jesse Jackson at Mitchell College, New London, CT, 15 May 1999.

15 Ibid.

16 "Rev. Jesse Jackson addresses US media on his return from Yugoslavia," ABCNEWS.com, Monday 3 May 1999.

17 "Clinton, Jackson meet," ABCNEWS.com, 3 May 1999.
18 Buddhist secularism is a point of pride for Kumaratunga's cabinet. For instance, Speaker K. B. Ratnayake, speaking in Malaysia, vaunted Sri Lanka's constitution for its protection of the Sasana and of Sri Lanka's religious minorities; 'Speaker points out need to strengthen democracy," *The Island*, 15 March 1998.
19 T. Bartholomeusz, "First among equals: Buddhism and Sri Lanka," in I. Harris (ed.), *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, London: Pinter, 1999, pp. 173–93.
20 "Govt. has spent Rs. 1485 m [*sic*] to foster, protect Sasana," *The Daily News*, 10 August 1998.
21 For instance, "Free media must be adversarial," in which Kumaratunga is referred to as "an idealist and secular," *The Island*, 9 February 1997.
22 "Mahanayake on why he quit council," *The Island*, 12 January 1997; also "Mahinda and Mangala lock horns," *The Island*, 12 January 1997, which discusses the resignation of the monks.
23 S. J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in Sri Lanka*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996, p. 19.
24 "UNP's first warning to the govt.," *The Island*, 16 August 1998.
25 "President allocates Rs. 100 m [*sic*] to promote religions, culture," *The Daily News*, 13 August 1998.
26 Kumaratunga's patronage of Buddhism is discussed in "Tiger," *The Island*, 10 August 1998; and in "A year of progress," *The Daily News*, 11 November 1995.
27 S. J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia,* p. x.
28 J. T. Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, p. 12.
29 Ibid., p. 13.
30 For a critique of the developmental theory of the rise of secularism and the nation-state, see S. J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*, pp. 14–16 (whence the quotations in the text).
31 T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998; S. Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993; E. Leach, "Buddhism in the post-colonial political order in Burma and Ceylon," *Daedalus*, 102 (1973): 29–54.
32 D. E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 23.
33 H. L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 16.
34 C. Geertz, *Islam Observed*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968, pp. 111–12.
35 G. G. Raheja and A. G. Gold, *Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994, p. 3.
36 S. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom,* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986, p. 116.
37 For more on Turner's notion of root paradigms, see V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974; reprinted 1987, p. 64: "Paradigms of this fundamental sort reach down to irreducible life stances of individuals, passing beneath conscious prehension to a fiduciary hold on what they sense to be axiomatic values, matters of life or death."
38 S. Hauerwas and L. G. Jones, *Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, p. 164.
39 S. Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life*, p. 19

40 S. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 119.
41 Ibid., p. 120.
42 Ibid.
43 S. Hauerwas and L. G. Jones, *Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, p. 170.
44 Ibid., p. 159.
45 E. V. Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996; T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva, (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*.
46 E. V. Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*: see particularly the introduction, for a cautionary warning about essentializing "Sinhala" and "Tamil" identities.
47 S. Kemp and J. Squires, "Introduction," in S. Kemp and J. Squires (eds), *Feminisms*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 10.
48 The Sanskrit spelling shall be retained throughout. Though many in Sri Lanka use the Pali spelling and pronunciation – *dhamma* – most of my informants, in English and in Sinhala, used a Sanskrit form.
49 It is important to note, however, that Hauerwas himself is a pacifist of a sort, and that I am thus grounding this study of war in the work of a pacifist.
50 For a similar argument, see Charles Hallisey "Ethical particularism in Theravada Buddhism," *The Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 3 (1995): 6.
51 Cited in Venerable Palane Siri Vajiranana Maha Nayaka,"Light to all the world," *The Buddhist*, XI, II (June 1940): 25.
52 H. L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999, pp. 53–5.
53 Ibid., p. 2.
54 "Buddha's birthday," *The Buddhist*, III, 20 (8 May 1891).
55 "A fallen church," *The Buddhist*, LXIII, 4 (December 1993–February 1994), p. 17.
56 D. Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 7–8.
57 G. Obeyesekere, "Buddhism, Nationhood, and Cultural Identity," in M. E. Marty and R. S. Appleby (eds), *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 233. The italics are in the original.
58 See, for instance, S. Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life*.
59 [Untitled editorial], *Bauddha Peramuna*, 21 September 1957, p. 2.
60 " 'Peace needed for arts to thrive,' – PM," *The Daily News*, 25 August 1958. Also see untitled article on p. 5 of the 7 July 1958 issue of the *The Daily News* that discusses the number of casualties.
61 "Jeers at meeting," *The Daily News*, 9 December 1958.
62 Among those studies, see J. Manor, *The Expedient Utopia: Bandaranaike and Ceylon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
63 For instance, the letter to the editor, "Whither LSSP," *The Daily News*, 14 October 1958.
64 In English transliterations, variations of *dharmadwipa* include combinations of Sinhala, Pali, and Sanskrit: *dhammadeepa*; *dharmadeepa*; *dhammadweepa*; *dhammadwipa*.
65 For instance, " 'Religious education is lacking' – PM's wife," *The Daily News*, 18 October 1958; and "PM's wife on the role of Dhamma Schools," *The Daily News*, 15 November 1958.
66 " 'Follow example of Gunananda Thero,' says IGP," *The Daily News*, 23 September 1958.

67 According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "Tamil" is the "native name (known in the eighth century) of the people and language; in Pali and Prakrit Damila, Davila, Dravida, Sinhalese Demala, Sanskrit Dramila, Dramida, Dravida."
68 S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 1.
69 Ibid., p. 2
70 S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*, here argues against "looking at something reified that is Buddhism" (p. 3), that is, equating "true" Buddhism with the texts of the Pali canon. Be that as it may, in Tambiah's 1992 opus, pacific Buddhism – what we generally assume to be true Buddhism – is juxtaposed to violent Buddhism, the latter of which Tambiah regards as enigmatic.
71 H. L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka.*
72 Here, I must draw a distinction between those who defend religion in militant fashion and those whom R. Scott Appleby refers to as religious militants, that is, those who defend religion in non-violent ways and are peace makers. See R. S. Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation,* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, pp. 121–66.
73 H. de Vries and S. Weber, "Introduction," in H. de Vries and S. Weber (eds), *Violence, Identity and Self-Determination*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 2.
74 A point that Chandra de Silva and I attempted to make in our 1998 study of Buddhist fundamentalism; see "Buddhist fundamentalism and identity in Sri Lanka," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998, pp. 1–35.
75 A. Appadurai, F. J. Korom, and M. A. Mills (eds), *Gender, Genre, and Power in South Asian Expressive Traditions*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991; M. Lepowsky, "The way of the ancestors: Custom, innovation, and resistance," *Ethnology*, 30 (1991): 217–35; D. Lowenthal, "Archaeologists and others," in P. Gathercole and D. Lowenthal (eds), *The Politics of the Past*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, pp. 302–14.
76 G. Pandey, "In defense of the fragment: Writing about Hindu–Muslim riots in India today," *Representations*, 37 (Winter 1992): 28.
77 See Chapter 3 of this study.
78 For more on this see J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986; and G. W. Stocking, Jr. (ed.), *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.
79 "Tambiah replies to critics," *The Sunday Island* (Colombo), 26 December 1993.
80 The Venerable Maduluwawe Sobitha Nayaka Thera is a well-known proponent of the government's goal to eradicate the LTTE through military intervention. His views are expressed in "Gen. Ratwatte most qualified to fight against terrorists," *The Daily News*, 13 July 1998. For more on Sobitha Thera, see Chapters 2 and 3 of this study.
81 "We must educate people to protest against 'Buddhism Betrayed'," *The Island*, 11 December 1993.
82 Dr P. Dissanayake, "Reply to Professor Stanley Tambiah," *The Island*, 2 January 1994.
83 For more on the *Sinhala Commission Report*, see Chapter 2 of this study.
84 "We must educate people to protest against 'Buddhism Betrayed'."
85 For more on this, see T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*.

86 N. Fernando, "A plea for tolerance," *Sunday Observer* (Colombo), 26 December 1993.

87 S. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

88 N. Fernando, "A plea for tolerance."

89 For more on the controversy, see J. Spencer (ed.), *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990.

90 K. M. de Silva, *Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986, p. vii.

91 It is of interest to note that after David Chu, a member of Hong Kong's legislature, published an essay entitled "Sri Lanka's rebel monks" in the *South China Morning Post* in October 1997, angry Sinhala Buddhists defended the Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka in language reminiscent of Tambiah's detractors. The controversy is covered in *The Island*, 26 October 1997, in two articles: "Sri Lanka's militant monks call the shots," and "Buddhist faith belittled."

92 The controversy surrounding *Buddhism Betrayed?* often was referred to in the English-medium newspapers as the "Tambiah Affair." For example, Hassina Leelarathna, "A letter to the editor," *The Island*, 17 January 1994.

93 R. Siriwardena, "Buddhism Betrayed," *Ceylon Daily News*, 12 December 1993.

94 See the articles in the *Sunday Observer* (Colombo), the *Ceylon Daily News*, and *The Island* (cited above).

95 For a summary of this scholarship, see T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva, "Buddhist fundamentalism and identity in Sri Lanka," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, pp. 1–35.

96 S. Perera, "Sinhala grievance – the Metadata … ," *The Daily News*, 25 August 1998.

97 Ibid.

98 "Prof. Peiris assures safety of the Buddha Sasana," *The Daily News*, 1 April 1995. See also "Country before party, says Prof. Peiris," *The Island*, 16 August 1998; despite his assurances, the monks are resistant to devolution. Their resistance is discussed in "Voters choice: Garbage dumps or national referendum," *The Island*, 9 February 1997.

99 For an interesting discussion of the stories that children learn in school, and the effect they have on the political process, see C. R. de Silva, "The sources of political learning in Sri Lanka," in C. R. de Silva and D. Wesumperamuna (eds), *Political Culture in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, 1988, pp. 33–55.

100 The frequency in which the life of Dutugemunu is the subject of children's books must be noted: among the collection of children's stories at the National Library, Colombo, are the following Sinhala texts: *Dutugemunu Vihara Asna*; *Dutugemunu Raju Malee Naeta*; *Jatika Totilla*; *Soma Devi, Budu Dahama ha Samaha Jitithaya*; *Kumarodaya*; and *Sadhu Charita*.

101 S. Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life*, p. 82.

102 For more on this text, see C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature* (2nd edn), Battaramulla, Sri Lanka: Department of Cultural Affairs, pp. 7 and 89–93.

103 For more on this text, see ibid., pp. 10 and 127–9.

104 For more on Sinhala theater and the manipulation of nationalist themes, including the life and legend of Dutugemunu, see Sarath Amunugama, "John de Silva and the Sinhala Nationalist Theatre," *Ceylon Historical Journal*, 25, 1–4 (1978): 285–304.

105 H. L. Seneviratne, "Identity and the conflation of past and present," in H. L. Seneviratne (ed.), *Identity, Consciousness and the Past,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997 (first published in 1989 in *Social Analysis,* 5, September 1989), p. 8.

106 George Turnour cited in E. Nissan, "History in the making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist nation," in H. L. Seneviratne (ed.), *Identity, Consciousness and the Past*, p. 32.

107 Of course, that the text was not consulted does not mean that the stories were unknown or not circulated prior to the early nineteenth century.

108 See, for instance, "Prof. Carlo's black skin and white mask," *The Island*, 28 September 1997, which is an indictment of Carlo Fonseka's published arguments that the *Mahavamsa* is responsible for Sinhala hatred of the Tamil. A similar critique of Fonseka appeared in "Professor Carlo Fonseka and the Mahavamsa," *The Island*, 12 October 1997; and "Carlo barking up the wrong tree," *The Island*, 26 October 1997.

109 H. L. Seneviratne, "Identity and the conflation of past and present," in H. L. Seneviratne (ed.), *Identity, Consciousness and the Past*, p. 8.

110 R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *The Kinsmen of the Buddha: Myth as Political Charter in the Ancient and Early Medieval Kingdoms of Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, undated (reproduced from *Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities*, 2, 1 (1976)), pp. 53–62.

111 Ibid., p. 55.

112 H. L. Seneviratne, "Identity and the conflation of past and present," in H. L. Seneviratne (ed.), *Identity, Consciousness and the Past*, p. 8.

113 For more on the role of relics in Sri Lankan Buddhism, see K. Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

114 R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *The Kinsmen of the Buddha: Myth as Political Charter in the Ancient and Early Medieval Kingdoms of Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, undated (reproduced from *Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities*, 2, 1, 1976), p. 56.

115 Ibid.

116 H. L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka*, p. 21.

117 S. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 134.

118 See D. Little, "Religion and morality in Theravada Buddhism," in D. Little and S. B. Twiss (eds), *Comparative Religious Ethics: A New Method*, New York: Harper & Row, 1978, pp. 210–50. I am indebted to John Kelsay for helping me to articulate Little's argument.

119 C. Hallisey, "Ethical particularism in Theravada Buddhism," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 3 (1995): 2.

120 Ibid., p. 3.

121 Ibid., p. 5.

122 J. Stout, *Ethics After Babel: The Language of Morals and Their Discontents*, Boston: Beacon, 1988, p. 75.

123 It is important to acknowledge that Ross is at odds with Hauerwas, particularly regarding the manner in which we come to know what the rules of ethical behavior are.

124 C. Hallisey, "Ethical particularism in Theravada Buddhism," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 3 (1996): 4.

125 Ibid., p. 6. For arguments against Hallisey's line of thinking, see K. Schilbrack, "The general and the particular in Theravada ethics: A response to Charles Hallisey," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 4 (1997): 98–111. For Hallisey's response to Schilbrack, see "A response to Kevin Schilbrack," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 4 (1997): 184–8.

126 O. A. A. Jayasekere, "Medical practice and Buddhism," *The Buddhist*, III, 11 (6 March 1891): 82.

127 "Can lying be justified," *The Buddhist*, III, 47 (13 November 1891): 372.

128 Ibid. A. E. Buultjens is a Buddhist Burgher. For more on Buultjens, see T. Bartholomeusz, "Buddhist Burghers and Sinhala-Buddhist Fundamentalism," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, pp. 167–85.

129 In a later issue, Buultjens commented that "we only stated our opinion that where the disclosure of a fact does harm to another and no good to one's self or to society and not required by constituted authority, the suppression of the fact by discreet silence is preferable." See *The Buddhist*, III, 50 (4 December 1891): 399.

130 DBJ, "Truth and lying: To the editor of the Buddhist," *The Buddhist*, III, 50 (4 Decemer 1891): 398.

131 Ibid.; one wonders whether DBJ is D. Baron Jayatilake, the great Buddhist politician and revivalist.

132 K. D. Kulatunge, "The first precept," *The Buddhist*, LVII, 5 (January–February 1986): 4.

133 R. Thurman, "The Dalai Lama on China, hatred, and optimism," *Mother Jones*, 22, 6 (November–December 1997), Internet edn.

134 Ibid.

135 G. Pandey, "In defense of the fragment: Writing about Hindu–Muslim riots in India today," Representations, 37 (Winter 1992): 29.

136 J. F. Childress, " 'Nonviolent resistance: Trust and risk-taking' twenty-five years later," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 25 (Fall 1997): 216.

137 R. Lingat, *Royautes Bouddhiques: Asoka et La Fonction Royale à Ceylan*, Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1989, p. 110.

2 JUST-WAR THINKING IN TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

1 For more on devolution, see A. Shastri, "Sri Lanka's provincial council system: A solution to the ethnic problem?," *Asian Survey*, XXXII (August 1992): 723–44.

2 "Mahanayakas say 'no' to reforms," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), Internet edn, 5 March 2000.

3 "Chandrika and the Chemmani allegations," *The Island* (Colombo), 15 July 1998.

4 *War for Peace*, Colombo: Sudu Nelum Vyaparaya, undated, translated for this study by Yashodara Sarachchandra.

5 Quoted in J. Perera, "The problem of devolution to ethnic and religious units," *The Island*, 10 November 1997.

6 "Splits in the alliance and protest campaigns over polls," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 19 July 1998.

7 AEB (that is, A. E. Buultjens, the editor), "Buddhism," *The Buddhist*, V, 47 (8 December 1893): 370.

8 "Ven. Sobitha Thera queries: 'For whose benefit are we trying to change unitary status of SL?'," *The Island*, 16 January 1998.

9 "Splits in the alliance and protest campaigns over polls," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 19 July 1998.

10 *Sinhala Commission Report*, Colombo: Samayawardhana, July 1998, p. 22.

11 Muslims, who in Sri Lanka constitute an ethnicity, are for the most part Tamil speakers and, therefore, are often included in contemporary political rhetoric as Tamils.

12 *The Political Package and the Vision for the Future of Sri Lanka*, Colombo: The Coalition for National Unity and Peace, 1995, p. 7.

13 T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva, "Buddhist fundamentalism and identity in Sri Lanka," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1998, pp. 1–35.

14 In order to dispel the rumor that Sudu Nelum's funds were being used to buy arms, the government publicly declared its intentions: In "Sudu Nelum funds will not be misused – MP," *The Daily News* (Colombo), 3 October 1995, a description of the Sudu Nelum funds appears, with specific uses outlined, that distinguishes its goals from the Defense Department's: "The Sudu Nelum Movement will only be utilised for the welfare of the soldier families," and "At present, the government spends about Rs. 48,000 [*sic*] per minute on the war."
15 *War for Peace*; for more on the ideology of *dharmadwipa*, see Chapter 1.
16 St Augustine, "To Count Boniface" (trans. J. G. Cunningham), in A. F. Holmes (ed.), *War and Christian Ethics*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991, p. 62.
17 In the government newspaper, *The Daily News*, for instance, on 25 July 1997, an essay, "Is state terrorism a just war?", was reproduced from an Indian newspaper, which suggested that the United National Party sponsored state terrorism.
18 *War for Peace*.
19 Thomas Aquinas, "Laws of War" (trans. Fathers of English Dominican Province), in A. F. Holmes (ed.), *War and Christian Ethics*. The other two criteria (for Thomas Aquinas) are just cause and right intention.
20 The final chapter, the thirty-seventh, records, "The Mahavamsa is ended."
21 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)* Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1995; in this study of R. Premadasa, the author sees the this-worldly orientation of the *Mahavamsa* as having the most immediate relevance in the Sri Lankan context. In the case of contemporary interpretations of the *Mahavamsa*, I see the this-worldly orientation as implicitly connected to its religious teachings, meant to inspire piety.
22 Quoted in S. Davis, " 'Et quod vis fac,' Paul Ramsey and Augustinian ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 19 (Fall 1991): 31.
23 "A just, free society based on the Buddha's teachings: PM," *The Daily News*, 6 August 1977.
24 "PM appeals to all Lankans: Fly national flag from Feb 1–5," *The Daily News*, 24 January 1990.
25 *War for Peace*.
26 Vesak commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha.
27 "Buddha's sublime Dhamma is more relevant to present situation – President," *The Sunday Observer* (Colombo), 14 May 1995.
28 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, p. 128.
29 "President on the war – 'We will attain highest victory with the least destruction'," *The Island*, 22 July 1995.
30 Ibid.
31 "If peace moves fail – Anuruddha," *The Daily News*, 3 April 1995.
32 Like many of Sri Lanka's contemporary politicians, Ratwatte has shaped his ideology on war in response to both local religious concerns and international law. Regarding the latter, it is significant to note that, in addition to casting his arguments for war in the rhetoric of last resort, Ratwatte has also granted immunity to deserters; "Save your children from the LTTE," *The Island*, 2 November 1997.
33 For example, "Princely warrior not for polls," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 2 August 1998.
34 "Splits in the Alliance and protest campaigns over polls," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 19 July 1998.
35 "Show of affinity with clergy: Anu going anti-package?," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 19 July 1998. In the editorial, it is suggested that the Venerale Sobhita's opposition to the package, and his alliance with General Ratwatte nonetheless, are a

source of tension between Ratwatte and the President: "Gen. Ratwatte's birthday celebrarions and his affinity to Ven. Sobitha Thera have become an issue within the PA [People's Alliance]."

36 G. Obeyesekere, "Duttagamini and the Buddhist conscience," in D. Allen (ed.), *Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 136.

37 W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, New York: Grove Press, 1959, p. 5. But see the Venerable Rahula's further remarks in Chapter 3 of this study.

38 J. Kelsay, "The just war tradition and the ethics of nuclear deterrence," *International Journal on the Unity of the Sciences*, 2 (Summer 1989): 229–52.

39 In a further exposition of just-war criteria and non-Christian tradition, Kelsay explores the moral perspective of Muslims as they prepared for, and justified, the Iran–Iraq conflict and the Gulf War. See J. Kelsay*, Islam and War: The Gulf War and Beyond*, Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1993.

40 See Obeyesekere's study of the *Bhagavad Gita*: G. Obeyesekere, "Duttagamini and the Buddhist conscience," in D. Allen (ed.), *Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia*, pp. 141–2.

41 Here I have expanded upon Kelsay's ideas in "The just war tradition and the ethics of nuclear deterrence," *International Journal on the Unity of the Sciences*, 2 (Summer 1989): 231.

42 For more, see J. F. Childress, " 'Nonviolent resistance: Trust and risk-taking' twenty five years later," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 25 (Fall 1997), pp. 213–20.

43 R. Audi, *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 35.

44 Interview with the Venerable Athuraliya Rathana in Colombo on 22 August 1998.

45 The venerable monk argued this, contrary to recent formulations of Buddhism and pacifism in scholarship. For instance, see L. Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist attitude towards war," in J. E. M. Houben and K. R. Van Kooij (eds), *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-Violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History*, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1999, pp. 46–67; and K. Kraft, "Introduction," in K. Kraft (ed.), *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 1.

46 Nalin de Silva writes frequently to the newspapers, and has had his own column in one paper. He is opposed to the devolution of power and is the author of "An introduction to Tamil racism in Sri Lanka."

47 Interview with Nalin de Silva in Maharagama on July 30 1998.

48 B. G. Gokhale, "Early Buddhist kingship," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 26 (November 1966): 15–22.

49 J. Helgeland, R. J. Daly and J. P. Burns, *Christians and the Military: The Early Experience*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985, p. 16. As the authors point out, Jesus is said to have spoken with a centurion, but Jesus' teachings do not incorporate military metaphors.

50 W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught,* p. 128.

51 I assume this simile is drawn from the *Cula Assapura Sutta*, which makes the case that a true monk is he who purifies himself from all unwholesome states. For a translation, see Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourse of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995, pp. 372–5.

52 For the text, see "Yodhajivo ," in M. L. Feer (ed.), *Samyutta Nikaya IV*, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1990), pp. 308–9; for a translation, see "Fighting men," in F. L. Woodward (trans.), *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, Part IV, London: Luzac & Company, 1956, pp. 216–17; for the argument, see L. Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist attitude towards war," in J. E. M. Houben and K. R. Van Kooij (eds), *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-Violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History*, p. 48, and Chapter 4 of this study.

53 Here Gokhale cites the *Digha Nikaya, I*, p. 134.
54 Here Gokhale cites the *Samyutta Nikaya, I*, p. 84.
55 B. G. Gokhale, "Early Buddhist kingship," Journal of Asian Studies, 26 (November 1966): 17. Here Gokhale cites the *Samyutta Nikaya, I,* p. 84.
56 S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror, World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 41.
57 *Agganna Sutta*, in T. W. and C. A. Rhys Davids (trans.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV, London: Luzac & Company, 1957, p. 87. For more on this text, see S. Collins, "The discourse on what is primary (Agganna-Sutta): An annotated translation," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 21 (December 1993): 301–94.
58 See St Augustine, *The Political Writings* (ed. H. Paolucci), Chicago: Regnory Gateway, 1962, *passim*.
59 *Agganna Sutta*, p. 88.
60 See both the CSS and the AS.
61 J. E. Carpenter (ed.), *The Digha Nikaya*, Vol. III, London: The Pali Text Society, 1976, p. 59. For a full translation, see *Cakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta*, in T.W. and C.A. Rhys Davids (trans.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV, p. 60.
62 Ibid.
63 J. E. Carpenter (ed.), *The Digha Nikaya*, Vol. III, London: The Pali Text Society, 1976, p. 60 (for the Pali text).
64 Ibid., p. 61.
65 S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror, World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*, p. 39.
66 J. E. Carpenter (ed.), *The Digha Nikaya*, Vol. III, p. 62. For the fourfold army, see *catur* in *Pali Text Society, Pali–English Dictionary*, London: Pali Text Society, 1979, p. 261.
67 J. E. Carpenter (ed.), *The Digha Nikaya*, Vol. III, p. 62 (for the Pali text).
68 Interview with the Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera in Kelaniya on 3 August 1998.
69 Interview with the Venerable Piyadassi Maha Thera at Vajiraramaya, Bambalapitiya, Colombo, on 28 July 1997.
70 For the *Maha-Ummagga Jataka* (No. 546), see E. B. Cowell (ed.), *The Jatakas, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1990 (originally published from 1895–1907), pp. 156–246.
71 This *Jataka* (No. 38) was cited most frequently by monks and laity alike who used canonical stories to support their points of view on acceptable uses and limits of violence. For the full text, see ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 95–8.
72 S. Collins, "The discourse on what is primary (Agganna-Sutta): An annotated translation," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 21 (December 1993): 316.
73 Interview in Ethul Kotte on 13 August 1998.
74 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*, Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982, p. 63.
75 I recognize that Childress' characterization of just-war criteria has been criticized, for example, by Jeffrey Stout. Nevertheless, I find the language of presumption and obligations, coupled with Childress' insistence on the emotional dimensions of regret and remorse, to resonate well with Theravada Buddhism. For more on Stout's criticism, see J. Stout, "Justice and resort to war: A sampling of Christian-ethical thinking," in J. T. Johnson and J. Kelsay (eds), *Cross, Crescent and Sword: The Justification and Limitation of War in Western and Islamic Tradition*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1990, pp. 3–33.
76 G. Obeyesekere, "Theodicy, sin, and salvation in a sociology of Buddhism," in E. R. Leach (ed.), *Dialectic in Practical Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 7–40.

77 G. Obeyesekere, "Buddhism and conscience: An exploratory essay," *Daedalus*, 120 (Summer 1991): 219–41.
78 See, in particular, G. Obeyesekere, "Buddhism, nationhood, and cultural identity," in M. E. Marty and R. S. Appleby (eds), *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 233.
79 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*, p. 68.
80 "Last resort" is one criterion in comprehensive just-war thinking. See below.
81 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*, p. 68.
82 Ibid., p. 71.
83 Ibid., p. 80; I have paraphrased Childress here.
84 Ibid., p. 75.
85 Interview conducted on 23 July 1997 at Gangaramaya, Kollupitiya, Colombo.
86 Ibid.
87 "President on the war – 'We will attain highest victory with the least destruction'," *The Island*, 22 July 1995.
88 B. G. Gokhale, "Early Buddhist kingship," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 26 (November 1966): 21. Here, Gokhale cites the *Samyutta Nikaya I*, p. 116.
89 A. Bareau argued this in "Le Bouddha et les rois," Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 80 (1993): 15–39 (see particularly p. 38).
90 Interview with the Venerable Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera in Kelaniya on 3 August 1998.
91 For further discussion of this scene, see L. Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist attitude towards war," in J. E. M. Houben and K. R. Van Kooij (eds), *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-Violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History*, pp. 50–1. However, Schmithausen's reading of the text is different from my informants'. In view of the Ajatasattu–Pasenadi narrative, Schmithausen claims that "a strict application of the Buddhist ethical principle of not killing cannot but lead to the rejection of *all* kinds of war, including defensive war" (p. 51, original emphasis).
92 Interviews with the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi in Kandy on 12 August 1997 and 20 July 1998.
93 E. J. Harris, *Violence and Disruption in Society: A Study of the Early Buddhist Texts*, Kandy: The Wheel Publication No. 392/393, 1994, p. 5.
94 *Samyutta Nikaya I*, p. 97; see also E. J. Harris, *Violence and Disruption in Society: A Study of the Early Buddhist Texts*, p. 5, for a discussion of the same passage.
95 For more on Buddhist kingship and social order, see S. Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 27.
96 *Anguttara Nikaya* 1.18. 3/1.33.
97 B. G. Gokhale, "Early Buddhist kingship," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 26 (November 1966): 21.
98 S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror, World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*, pp. 43–5.
99 Ibid., p. 43.
100 Ibid., p. 45.
101 Ibid., *passim*.
102 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts,* p. xiii.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 G. Obeyesekere, "Duttagamini and the Buddhist conscience," in D. Allen (ed.), *Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia*, p. 150.
106 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982, p. 75.
107 In his meditation of Dutugemunu's conscience, Obeyesekere notes that "Duttagamini claims that his war was not for the joy of sovereignty but to establish the doctrine of

the Buddha"; see G. Obeyesekere, "Duttagamini and the Buddhist conscience," in D. Allen (ed.), *Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia*, p. 142.

108 J. T. Johnson, "Historical roots and sources of just war tradition in Western culture," in J. Kelsay and J. T. Johnson (eds), *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions,* New York: Greenwood Press, 1991, p. 5.

109 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, p. 139.

110 H. Saddhatisa, *Buddhist Ethics*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, revised edn, 1997, p. 60.

111 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*, pp. 64–5.

112 Ibid., p. 77.

113 "That's not killing!," *The Island*, 13 May 1998.

114 Ibid.

115 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*, p. 78, where remorse is discussed as an aspect of "right intention," a criterion of *jus ad bellum*; see also pp. 70–1 of Childress' study.

116 According to John Kelsay, in a personal communication to me, the proper exegesis of St Augustine at this point for Stout and Johnson would stress that the condition of the world, as fallen, is to be mourned, rather than the warrior's participation in a just war. For Childress, however, the passage suggests the necessity of a mournful conscience on the part of a warrior, even a just one.

117 St Augustine, *The Political Writings*, pp. 136–8.

118 See ibid.

119 "Traditional Tamil homelands – a reply by Peter Jayasuriya," *The Daily News*, 14 November 1989.

120 "Anuradhapura and Mahintale," *The Buddhist*, 1, 36 (23 August 1889): 286.

121 G. Obeyesekere, "Duttagamini and the Buddhist conscience," in D. Allen (ed.), *Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia*, p. 139.

122 "Help Premier usher in a Dharmista Society," *The Daily News*, 6 September 1977.

123 "Revolutions of violence not for me," *The Daily News*, 25 January 1990. This is the text of a speech given on the occasion of the bicentennial of the French Revolution.

124 Ibid.

125 J. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*, pp. 64–5.

126 Ibid., p. 80.

127 J. M. Senaveratne, *Dutugemunu: His Life and Times,* Freedom of Lanka Series Vol. 1: *The Struggle Against the Tamils*, Colombo: Sinha Publications, 1946, p. 43.

128 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993*), p. 30.

129 For more on this, see K. Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

130 Among them, see A. Greenwald, "The relic on the spear: Historiography and the saga of Duttagamini," in B. Smith (ed.), *Religion and Legitimization of Power in Sri Lanka*, Chambersburg, MD: Anima Publishers, 1978; and K. Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition*, pp. 110–12.

131 Advertisements appear in the *Dinamina*, a Sinhala newspaper, on 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 October 1979, festooned with characters from the *Mahavamsa*, including Velasumana, Pussadeva, Mahasona and others who fought alongside Dutugemunu. Articles also appeared in the Sinhala press soon after the cartoon was banned, e.g. "Dutugemunu Tahanam?" ("Dutugemunu Banned?"), *Silumina,* 21 October 1979; according to the article: "the Censor Board has requested the Film Corporation to

stop showing the film … [because] some have said that this film might cause harm to the image of King Dutugemunu who is considered the greatest hero in history."

132 "Army Day Commander's message," *The Daily News*, 11 October 1995.

133 Ibid.

134 Obeyesekere has explored some of the ideas of scholars and monks who, guided by the presumption that Buddhism's duty of non-violence is absolute, try to rationalize, or explain away, Dutugemunu's violence. See G. Obeyesekere, "Duttagamini and the Buddhist conscience," in D. Allen (ed.), *Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia*, pp. 140–1.

135 Though Little's scholarship on Sri Lanka has been criticized, it draws together a variety of sources that have bearing on our discussion here. For a very strident critique, see G. H. Peiris, "Book review – David Little's Sri Lanka: The invention of enmity," *Ethnic Studies Report*, XII (July 1994): 258–64.

136 D. Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994, p. 79. Here Little cites S. Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 127.

137 Ibid.

138 Quoted in J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, pp. 26–7.

139 Gamini Dissanayake, quoted in ibid., p. 32.

140 "Death Squads and rewards for dynamic leadership," *The Island*, 25 September 1994.

141 U. Phadnis, *Religion and Politics in Sri Lanka*, London: C. Hurst & Co., 1976; B. Kapferer, *Legends of People: Myths of State*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1988; S. Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life*; T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1998.

142 *Cakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta*, p. 65.

143 Ibid., p. 67.

144 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, p. 134.

145 D. Allen, "Religious–political conflict in Sri Lanka: Philosophical considerations," in D. Allen (ed.), *Religion and Political Culture in South Asia*, p. 194.

146 For a history of "true" and "false" versions of Buddhism, see G. Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism," *History of Religions*, 31 (1991): 1–23.

147 "Buddhist principles and values are a great source of strength to govt." (speech delivered at the 61st Upasampada ceremony of Sri Lanka's Ramanna Nikaya), *The Daily News*, 7 July 1997.

148 It is significant that, among the regiments in the Sri Lankan Army, one is named the "Gemunu Watch" in honor of the Buddhist warrior king, Dutugemunu.

3 *DHARMA YUDDHAYA* AND DHARMA WARRIORS IN SRI LANKA

1 A. Tilakaratne, "Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka: Search for a middle position," Twenty Seventh Sir Baron Jayatilaka Memorial Lecture, 13 February 1994, *The Buddhist* (1994): 12.

2 M. B. Pranger, "Monastic violence," in H. de Vries and S. Weber (eds), *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 44–57.

3 As opposed to the Three Refuges: the Buddha, the dharma, and the *sangha*. H. L. Seneviratne makes a similar claim, but underscores motive: "the slogan *rata*, *jatiya*, *agama* (country, nation, religion) … has now become the refuge of scoundrels." See H. L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 67.

4 Translated by H. L. Seneviratne in ibid., p. 274.

5 Ibid., p. 273.

6 Ibid., pp. 275–6.

7 I have never seen or heard *pavitra yuddhaya*, the literal translation of which would be "holy war."

8 "Letter to the editor," *Sarasavi Sandaresa* (Sinhala), 28 October 1898 (unless otherwise specified, all translations of Sinhala newspaper articles are by Asha Abeyasekera).

9 For more on the idea of a fourfold army, see Chapter 2 of this study.

10 "The importance of a Sinhala Army," *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, 1 April 1898.

11 H. Dharmapala, "Buddhist processions," *The Buddhist*, IV, 42 (21 October 1892): 330. Within a few years of writing this essay, he changed his name to Anagarika Dharmapala.

12 R. Audi, *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 34.

13 "Letter to the editor," *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, 28 November 1898.

14 For a brief discussion of the "masculinity of the West" and the "femininity of the East" in the Indian context, see G. G. Raheja and A. G. Gold, *Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994, p. 5: "… embodying colonially devalued 'feminine' qualities, Indian society was seen as unfit to rule itself and as morally inferior to the masculine West." See also M. Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995.

15 "The future of Ceylon," *The Buddhist*, V, 10 (10 March 1893): 77.

16 S. Amunugama, "Ideology and class interest in one of Piyadassa Sirisena's novels: The new image of the 'Sinhala Buddhist Nationalist'," in M. Roberts (ed.), *Sri Lanka: Collective Identities Revisited*, Colombo: Marga, 1997, pp. 335–53.

17 See, for instance, "Letter to the editor," *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, 3 May 1898, in which a "minor dispute between Sinhala and Muslims over the Malwatte Bo plant" was reported.

18 "Tamils," *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, 8 July 1898.

19 "Letter to the editor," *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, 26 August 1898. This theme was repeated in the same paper throughout September.

20 T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva, "Buddhist fundamentalism and identity in Sri Lanka," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva, eds, *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, pp. 1–35.

21 "Letter to the editor," *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, 16 August 1898. "Muslim shops and villagers," *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, 21 January 1898, carried a similar warning; as did "Letter to the editor," *Sarasavi Sandaresa*, 25 March 1898.

22 K. Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Centre for Social Analysis, 1985, p. 14.

23 For a more recent study of the riots, see S. J. Tambiah, "The 1915 Sinhala Buddhist–Tamil riots in Ceylon," in *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 36–81.

24 "Buddhist Sinhalas will," *Sinhala Jathiya* (Sinhala), 26 January 1915.

25 "Blessings to Mother Lanka," *Sinhala Jathiya*, 2 March 1915.

26 "Fearless religion," *Lakminipahana* (Sinhala), 31 July 1915.

27 Ibid.
28 [Untitled article], *Lakminipahana*, 6 March 1915.
29 "Lord Buddha and the Demala God," *Lakminipahana*, 6 March 1915.
30 "Buddhism in Ceylon," *Lakminipahana*, 13 February 1915.
31 The Sri Lanka National Archives has in its collection issues from January through May of 1927.
32 [Untitled editorial], *Lanka Naadaya* (Sinhala), 9 February 1927.
33 "Malalasekera," *Bauddha Lokaya* (Sinhala), 3 January 1991.
34 G.P. Malalasekera (ed.), *English–Sinhalese Dictionary*, Colombo: Gunaena, 1948, p. 437.
35 "Dharma Yudhaya," *Bauddha Peramuna* (Sinhala), 7 March 1956: "The monks have begged the PM not to have an election during the Jayanthi year due to the corruption and unrest that occurs. Since he has not obeyed the monks' pleas, they are launching a *dharma yudhaya*."
36 Ibid.
37 "Buddhist tolerance," *Bauddha Peramuna*, 27 April 1957.
38 [Untitled article], *Bauddha Peramuna*, 7 March 1956, p. 4.
39 W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, New York: Grove Press, 1959, p. 5.
40 W. Rahula, *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*, New York: Grove Press, 1974 (first published in Sinhala in 1946), p. 20.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 21.
43 Ibid.; Walpola Rahula cites the *Mahavamsa* here.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p. 152, note 1.
47 For example, U. Phadnis, *Religion and Politics in Sri Lanka*.
48 For example, Walpola Rahula.
49 R. Gombrich and G. Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 254–5.
50 N. Mahahimi, [Untitled article], *Bauddha Peramuna*, 23 March 1957.
51 In a more recent expression of this ideology, a captain in the US Army and a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism has maintained that "even though there's a strong case for thinking that any form of military service goes contrary to Buddhist principles … Rockwood saw the army as 'an opportunity to express compassion in a skillful way.' " See "The Buddhist soldier," *The Golden Drum*, 38 (August–October 1995): 23; *The Golden Drum* is published by Windhorse Publications for the Fellowship of World Buddhists Order.
52 S. Amunugama, "Buddhaputra and Bhumiputra? Dilemmas of modern Sinhala Buddhist monks in relation to ethnic and political conflict," *Journal of Religion*, 21 (1991): 115–39.
53 "Rajakeeeya Panditha Hewapitagedera Gnanasinghe," *Bauddha Peramuna*, 8 June 1957.
54 "Editorial," *Bauddha Peramuna*, 23 September 1957.
55 *Bauddha Peramuna*, 1 January 1958.
56 On 13 July 1957, an untitled article appeared in the *Bauddha Peramuna* about a monk who warned that "Tamil might become the state language." He added that "no harm should befall any Tamils living in the south as an example of our civilized nature"; on 3 August 1957, the paper carried an article that criticized S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's plans to make Tamil the official language in the north. According to a monk, "Just as the sun and moon remain, it is obvious that a Sinhala–Tamil dispute will occur. S. W. R. D. has given our foremost enemy the Tamils a weapon to destroy the Sinhalas."

57 K. Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*, p. 66.
58 S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 86.
59 S. Amunugama, "Buddhaputra and Bhumiputra? Dilemmas of modern Sinhala Buddhist monks in relation to ethnic and political conflict," *Journal of Religion*, 21 (1991): 115–39.
60 Captain L. B. Lanka Jayaratne, "Desamanya Gamani Jayasuriya," *The Island*, 14 May 1998.
61 "The country was always protected by monks," *Bauddha Peramuna*, 3 May 1958.
62 K. Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*, p. 61.
63 In Sinhala, *anumatha*.
64 "We cannot protect Buddhism without a fight," *Bauddha Peramuna*, 11 March 1961, my italics.
65 "Amendments to speech from throne discussed," *The Daily News* (Colombo), 3 July 1958.
66 T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva, "Buddhist fundamentalism and identity in Sri Lanka," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, pp. 4–5.
67 "What is Dharma Yudhaya," *Dharma Yudha*, June 1978; the paper was published monthly during its short run.
68 J. P. Pathirana, "Dharma is not for the indolent," *The Daily News*, 26 August 1988.
69 Ibid.
70 J. P. Pathirana, "The Buddhadhamma is not for the indolent," *The Buddhist*, LV, 1 (May–June 1984): 44.
71 Bhikkhu Piyadassi, "The path to holiness," *The Buddhist*, X, 2 (June 1939): 38.
72 Interview with Sumana Maniyo in the Sudharmaramaya, Madivela, Kotte, on 27 June 1997. For more on Buddhist nuns, see T. Bartholomeusz, *Women under the Bo Tree: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; 1996.
73 Interview with a monk of the Asgiriya Nikaya on 25 July 1997 in Colombo.
74 Interview with the Venerable Gnanapala in the Vajiraramaya, Bambalapitiya, Colombo, on 28 June 1997.
75 S. Mansingh, "The spread of Buddhism in Asia," *The Buddhist*, LVIII, 1 (May 1987): 21.
76 Dr A. D. P. Jayatilaka, "Crime in a Buddhist society," *The Buddhist*, LVI, 4 (October–December 1985): 19.
77 For more on Sarvodaya, see G. Bond, "Conflicts of identity and interpretation in Buddhism: The clash between Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the government of President Premadasa," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka*, pp. 36–52.
78 "Sarvodaya leader calls for 'Dharma Yuddha'," *The Island* (Colombo), 10 July 1983.
79 This accusation is lodged against the UNP on every anniversary of the 1983 riots. For instance, on the 1998 anniversary, Marwaan Macan-Markar argued that the present conflict "should be seen as an extension of the July riots. For it was the state then, under the rule of the UNP, that sanctioned its thugs to go after Tamils to 'teach them a lesson'," from "Black July is very much with us," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 26 July 1998.
80 S. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*, p. 97.
81 Ibid., p. 99.
82 S. Gourgouris, "Enlightenment and paranomia," in H. de Vries and S. Weber (eds), *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination,* p. 133.
83 Ibid.

84 E. Nissan, "Some thoughts on Sinhalese justifications for the violence," in J. Manor (ed.), *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, London: Croom Helm, 1984, pp. 175–95.
85 See E. V. Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 6–7.
86 "Buddhists have tremendous task in guiding the nation," *The Island*, 15 August 1983.
87 Ibid.
88 See, among the many studies on July 1983, S. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1986; V. Kanapathipillai, "July 1983: The survivor's experience," in V. Das (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 321–44; and P. Jeganathan, "In the shadow of violence: 'Tamilness' and the anthropology of identity in southern Sri Lanka," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka,* pp. 89–109.
89 J. Y. Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 4.
90 " 'Throughout history Sinhalese faced Tamil Invasions' – SD," *The Island*, 27 August 1983.
91 "Jeers at meeting," *The Daily News*, 9 December 1958.
92 J. Y. Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories*, pp. 21–2.
93 " 'When passions roused seek refuge in Buddhism' – Lalith," *The Island*, 30 August 1983.
94 Ibid.
95 Udukandawala Sarankara Himi, "Sinhala Youth, Wake up!," *Swarajaya* (Sinhala), 21 October 1928.
96 Ibid.
97 "Sri Sadarma Dematagoda Rewata," *Bauddha Lokaya*, 1 December 1950.
98 "Only English remains on the northern buses," *Lanka Deepaya* (Sinhala), 4 April 1958.
99 "The anti-Sri debates," *Lanka Deepaya*, 9 April 1958.
100 "Don't sacrifice the Sinhalas to the Tamils," *Lanka Deepaya*, 18 April 1958.
101 For more on this, see D.-H. Rajanayagam, "Tamils and the meaning of history," in C. Manogaran and B. Pfaffenberger (eds), *The Sri Lankan Tamils: Ethnicity and Identity*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994, pp. 54–83.
102 "Always remembered," *The Island*, 1 August 1998, original emphasis.
103 A similar wish appears, for instance, in the second year remembrance of Lt. Commander E. W. Wickramaratne; the obituaries page of *The Daily News*, 2 November 1997 and throughout.
104 "One Year Remembrance," *The Daily News*, 21 August 1998, original emphasis. The remembrance concludes with a verse from the canonical *Dhammapada* about the inevitability of death.
105 B. Gunasekere (ed.), *The Rajavaliya, or Historical narrative of Sinhalese Kings*, Colombo: George J. A. Skeen, 1900; reprinted 1954, p. 35. Prior to this simile, the text relates that Dutugemunu asked his warriors: "Shall we go out tomorrow to fight with the twenty mighty champions of the great king Elara and with his army, which is like an army of Mara, or shall we forbear?"
106 "President tells large public rally, 'Opposition teaming up with traitors to confuse the people'," *Sunday Observer* (Colombo), 19 April 1992, quoted in J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1995, p. 208.

107 G. Pandey, “In defense of the fragment: Writing about Hindu–Muslim riots in India today,” *Representations*, 37 (Winter 1992): 41.
108 For more on 1958, see T. Vittachi, *Emergency ’58: The Story of the Ceylon Race Riots*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1959; J. Manor, “Self-inflicted wound: Inter-communal violence in Ceylon, 1958,” in *The Collected Seminar Papers of The Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, 30 (1982): 15–26; E. Leach, “What the rioting in Ceylon means,” *The Listener* (June 1958): 926.
109 See, in particular, S. J. Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy*, for what he tells us, at the beginning of the book, is “an ‘engaged political tract’ rather than a ‘distanced academic treatise’ ” (p. ix); see also N. Gunasinghe, “The open economy and its impact on ethnic relations in Sri Lanka” in *Sri Lanka’s Ethnic Conflict: Myths, Realties and Perspectives*, Delhi: Navrang, 1984, pp. 97–214; S. Bastian “The political economy of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka: The July 1983 riot,” in V. Das (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, pp. 286–304; J. Spencer, “Collective violence and everyday practice in Sri Lanka,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 24 (1990): 620; B. Kapferer, *Legends of People: Myths of State*.
110 “The foundation of the social revolution,” *Dinamina* (Sinhala), 6 January 1958.
111 “The Federal Pact is not broken,” *Lanka Deepaya*, 17 April 1958.
112 “An attempt to divide the country,” *Lanka Deepaya*, 21 April 1958.
113 “We need a hero like Gemunu,” *Lanka Deepaya*, 7 April 1958.
114 For instance, not to harm the Tamils, but rather to boycott them instead; *Lanka Deepaya*, 22 April 1958.
115 J. C. Holt, *The Religious World of Kirti Sri: Buddhism, Art, and Politics in Late Medieval Sri Lanka*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 98.
116 Ibid., p. 100, Holt’s emphasis.
117 Quoted in J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa’s Presidency (1989–1993)*, p. 122.
118 “Inflammatory speeches by TULF MPs caused all the trouble,” *The Daily News*, 23 August 1977.
119 G. Pandey, “In defense of the fragment: Writing about Hindu–Muslim riots in India today,” *Representations*, 37 (Winter 1992): 37.
120 E. Nissan, “Some thoughts on Sinhalese justifications for the violence,” in J. Manor (ed.), *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, London: Croom Helm, 1984, p. 176.
121 In de Mel’s reflection upon the *Mahavamsa’s* story, and true to the *Mahavamsa*, Elara, a usurper, is nonetheless a *dharmista* king. In other words, though a Tamil and presumably a Hindu, Elara was righteous. Despite that, according to de Mel’s reading of the text, Elara’s rule was nevertheless a threat to the integrity of Sri Lanka, and even more pernicious than contemporary Tamil separatists’ claims. For more on Elara’s righteousness, see Chapter 5 of this study.
122 “ ‘Govt. will never allow division of the country’ – Ronnie,” *The Island*, 26 August 1983.
123 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa’s Presidency (1989–1993)*, p. 33.
124 Ibid., p. 31.
125 “Maha Sangha should ensure the future for Sinhalas,” *The Daily News*, 29 August 1983.
126 Cited in “Sinhala Psyche,” *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo) 23 August 1998.
127 “Sinhala grievance – the metadata … ,” *The Island*, 25 August 1998.
128 “Sinhala Psyche.”
129 R. Gombrich, “The consecration of a Buddhist image,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVI (November 1966): 28.

130 R. Audi, *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 34, original italics.
131 D. G. Kulatunge, "Terrorism and war a Buddhist perspective," *The Buddhist*, LVI, 1 (May 1985): 28.
132 Ibid., p. 29, original italics and parenthetical glosses.
133 Ibid.
134 Ven. K. Dhammabodhi Thera, "Relevance of the Buddha's message to to-day's society," *The Buddhist*, LVIII, 6 (March–April 1988): 17.
135 M. B. Pranger, "Monastic violence," in H. de Vries and S. Weber (eds), *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination*, pp. 49–50.
136 "First war – then celebrations," *Divayina*. (Unfortunately, this clipping was given to me without a date. My best guess is that it appeared sometime in 1992 and in any case it is certainly later than its reference to Walpola Rahula's remarks in "Militant monks," *The Golden Drum*, 25 (May–July 1992): 19.)

4 BUDDHISM, PACIFISM, WAR, AND ETHICAL ORIENTATIONS

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3 T. L. Beauchamp and J. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 3rd edn, Oxford: Oxford Universty Press, 1989, p. 26.
4 Ibid., p. 46.
5 H. Dharmapala, "India and Buddhism," *The Buddhist*, IV, 7 (12 February 1892), p. 53.
6 H. L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 41.
7 Ibid.
8 Presumably by Buultjens (the editor), "Reigns of terror – Christian and anti-Christian," *The Buddhist*, IV, 24 (17 June 1892): 188–90. The final sentence of the quotation is a paraphrase of Isaiah 1:18–19; I am grateful to John Kelsay for pointing out the allusion to the Hebrew Bible.
9 "India and Buddhism," *The Buddhist*, VI, 32 (24 August 1894): 256, original emphasis.
10 "Doctrines of Buddhism," *The Buddhist*, VI, 34 (7 September 1894): 267.
11 A. E. Buultjens (ed.), "Buddha Gaya," *The Buddhist*, V, 6, (10 February 1896): 44.
12 AK, "Crimes of Christianity," *The Buddhist*, IV, 49 (9 December 1892): 389.
13 H. de Vries and S. Weber, "Introduction," in H. de Vries and S. Weber (eds), *Violence, Identity and Self-Determination*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, p. 2.
14 J, "After a Dhyana book," *The Buddhist*, IV, 30 (30 July 1892): 233 (this article continues in the next issue, signed only by J).
15 H. Dharmapala, "Buddhist processions," *The Buddhist*, IV, 42 (21 October 1892), p. 330. Within a few years of writing this essay, he changed his name to Anagarika Dharmapala.
16 J. Holt, *The Religious World of Kirti Sri: Buddhism, Art, and Politics in Late Medieval Sri Lanka*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 10–13.
17 M. B. Pranger, "Monastic violence," in H. de Vries and S. Weber (eds)., *Violence, Identity and Self-Determination*, pp. 49–50.
18 "The Standard Dictionary," *The Buddhist*, VI, 19 (25 May 1894): 147.
19 "The Franco-Siamese War," *The Buddhist*, V, 27 (21 July 1893): 212.

20 For a history of "true" and "false" versions of Buddhism, see G. Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant presuppositions in the study of Indian Buddhism," *History of Religions*, 31 (1991): 1–23.
21 T. J. Bartholomeusz, "Mothers of Buddhas, mothers of nations: Kumaranatunga and her meteoric rise to power in Sri Lanka," *Journal of Feminist Studies*, 25 (1999): 211–25.
22 H. Aronson, *Love and Sympathy in Theravada Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980; Aronson's book is a corrective to the trend in Buddhist scholarship that Buddhism's highest ethic is one of non-attachment.
23 P. D. Premasiri, "Ethics," *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Colombo: Government of Sri Lanka, 1991, pp. 144–65.
24 For more on nonviolence in Buddhism, see H. Nakamura, "Violence and nonviolence in Buddhism," in P. P. Wiener and J. Fisher (eds), *Violence and Aggression in the History of Ideas*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974, pp. 173–86; Nakamura, however, focuses on Mahayana Buddhism.
25 For instance, in the *Udumbarika Sihanada Sutta*, the Buddha describes the true Buddhist as one who, "having put away these Five Hindrances, and to weaken by insight the strength of the things that defile the heart, abides letting his mind, fraught with love, pervade one quarter of the world, and so, too, the second quarter, and so the third, and so the fourth." See the *Udumbarika Sihanada Sutta* in T. W. Rhys Davids and C. A. F. Rhys Davids (trans.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. IV, London: Luzac & Company, 1957, pp. 44–5.
26 R. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of Early Teachings*, New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997, p. 4.
27 The *Kakacupama Sutta*, quoted in M. Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 70.
28 D. G. Kulatunge, "Metta – the first sublime state," *The Buddhist*, LVII, 2 (June–July 1987): 13.
29 "Operation Jayasikuru has put the enemy on the defensive," *The Daily News* (Colombo), 9 August 1997.
30 K. McC. Brown, *Moma Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991, p. 12.
31 D. Karunadasa, "Eelam and Christian attitudes," *The Island* (Colombo), 7 August 1998.
32 Mrs E. H. T. Gunasekera, "A Fallen Church," *The Buddhist*, LXIII, 4, (December 1993–February 1994): 17.
33 K. Pieris, "Buddhism, state and Tamil separatism," *The Island*, 27 March 1998.
34 Citizen D, " 'War' or 'Peace,' " *The Island*, 22 May 1998.
35 T. J. Bartholomeusz, "Women, war and peace in contemporary Sri Lanka," in E. B. Findly (ed.), *Women's Buddhism, Buddhism's Women: Tradition, Revision, Renewal*, Boston: Wisdom, 2000, pp. 283–96.
36 Citizen D, " 'War' or 'Peace,' " *The Island*, 22 May 1998.
37 My assistant in the summer of 1998, Yashodara Sarachchandra, made repeated attempts to arrange an interview with the Venerable Sobitha.
38 Interview on 13 August 1998, Piliyandala, Sri Lanka.
39 Interview on 22 August 1998, Colombo, Sri Lanka; the other reasons for the establishment of the NSS include reviving the *sangha*, maintaining higher ordinations, and building up meditation.
40 For a discussion of tolerance, see M. Waltzer, *On Toleration*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997; and C. R. de Silva and T. J. Bartholomeusz, *The Role of the Sangha in the Reconciliation Process in Sri Lanka*, No. 16 in the series *A History of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Recollection, Reinterpretation and Reconciliation*, Colombo: Marga, 2001.

41 Interview on 23 July 1997, Maharagama, Sri Lanka.
42 *Majjhima Nikaya* 1.127; quoted in H. Aronson, *Love and Sympathy in Theravada Buddhism*, p. 46.
43 *Majjhima Nikaya* 2.151; quoted in H. Aronson, *Love and Sympathy in Theravada Buddhism*, p. 29.
44 In this *sutta*, the monks are warned not to brag about the Buddha in this fashion. See the *Brahma-Gala Sutta*, in F. M. Muller (trans.), *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. II, London: Luzac & Company, Ltd, 1956, pp. 3–4.
45 T. L. Beauchamp and J. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 3rd edn, p. 374.
46 "PA making genuine effort to bring about peace," *The Daily News*, 19 May 1998.
47 Bhikkhu Metteyya, "The Lord of Peace," *The Buddhist*, X, 9 (January 1940): 128.
48 D. B. Jayatilaka and V. de Silva, "Dawn of a greater day," *The Buddhist*, X, 1 (May 1939): 1.
49 E. M. G. Edirisinge, "Suicide in Sri Lanka: Incidence and remedy," *The Island* (Saturday Magazine), 15 August 1998.
50 Ibid.
51 T. L. Beauchamp and J. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 3rd edn, p. 375.
52 Ibid.
53 R. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of Early Teachings*, p. 51.
54 K. D. Kulatunge, "The first precept," *The Buddhist*, LVII, 5 (January–February 1986): 4.
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57 H. Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics*, revised edn, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997, p. 60.
58 See ibid., p. 289, note 11.
59 Interview on 3 August 1998, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.
60 A similar argument is made in "The first precept in Buddhism," *The Daily News*, 11 August 1997: Having examined a variety of ethical quandaries, Lakshman Ranatunga argues that "This implies that some sort of killing is inevitable and necessary."
61 See Chapter 2.
62 Interview with the Venerable Madihe Pannasiha, 23 July 1997.
63 R. Audi, *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 22.
64 Essays appear by the Venerable Walpola Rahula, the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, and the scholar Lorna Devaraja, to name a few. Vesak commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha.
65 "The Buddha's advice to a soldier," *The Buddhist*, LXVIII, 1 (1988): 35–7.
66 Ibid., p. 35.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 For the text, see *Yodhajivo*, in M. L. Feer (ed.), *Samyutta Nikaya IV*, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1990, pp. 308–9; for a translation, see "Fighting men," in F. L. Woodward (trans.), *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, Part IV, London: Luzac & Company, 1956, pp. 216–17.
70 L. Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist attitude towards war," in J. E. M. Houben and K. R. Van Kooij (eds), *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-Violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History,* Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1999, p. 48.
71 St Augustine, too, rued the problem of desires and dispositions and their issue.

72 By way of comparison, it is interesting to note that Paul Carus, who helped to popularize Buddhism in the USA early in the twentieth century, read the same meaning into the text. It is possible that Gunasekera used Carus' *The Gospel of the Buddha* (which I found in The Young Men's Buddhist Association Library, Colombo), as the foundation for his argument. See *The Gospel of the Buddha*, Chicago: Open Court, 1894, pp. 124–31.
73 "The Buddha's advice to a soldier," *The Buddhist*, LXVIII, 1 (1988): 36
74 "The death penalty," *The Buddhist*, V, 20 (19 May 1893), p. 156.
75 Interview, 18 August 1998.
76 Ibid.; though the interview was conducted in English, the Venerable Wimalaratana used Pali technical terms.
77 Quoted in "Promises," *The Sunday Leader (*Colombo), 10 August 1997.
78 "The President has never issued directives to stop the war – Herath," *The Island*, 11 July 1998, for instance, wherein Nihal Galappathi (SLFP – Hambantota District) is quoted as saying "The gifting of cars to the Mahanayakes may be taken as a bribe [from] the president."
79 Quoted in "Support government in its endeavour, says thera," *The Daily News*, 1 August 1995.
80 "Cross-section of views of Buddhist monks on the ethnic conflict," *Sunday Observer* (Colombo), 26 July 1997.
81 "Kumara in stilt walk for peace," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo) 6 December 1998.
82 "Want peace, first find it in your mind," *The Daily News*, 22 April 1995.
83 e-mail correspondence of 11 October 1999.
84 "Want peace, first find it in your mind," *The Daily News*, 22 April 1995.
85 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1995, p. 125.
86 D. B. Jayatilaka and V. de Silva, "The great day," *The Buddhist*, XI, 1 (May, 1940).
87 For instance, "Anti-war rally," *The Island*, 3 November 1997.
88 J. Perera, "The peace movement takes wing," *The Island*, 12 October 1997.
89 " 'Sama Sadaham Yatra' was launched to achieve lasting peace – Ven. Vatinapaha Somananda Thera," *The Daily News*, 27 May 1998.
90 M. Macan-Markar, "Black July is very much with us," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 26 July 1998.
91 Ibid.
92 B. Premaratne, "Ending violence in accord with the Dhamma," *The Buddhist*, LVIII, 5 (January–February 1988): 10.
93 B. Premaratne, "Ending violence in accord with the Dhamma" (continued from the previous issue) *The Buddhist*, LVIII, 6 (March–April 1988): 16
94 That is, the *dasa rajadhamma*, which includes alms giving, morality, liberality, uprightness, gentleness, self-restriction, non-anger, non-hurtfulness, forbearance, and non-opposition. See the *Telapatta Jataka* for a reference (No. 96): E. B. Cowell (ed.), *The Jatakas, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, New Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1990; for a discussion of the *dasa rajadhamma*, see S. Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 460–1.
95 Interview with Bogoda Premaratne on 17 August 1998 in Colombo.
96 "Not against anyone joining nuke club – Kadir," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 17 May 1998.
97 "Pakistan surprised over Lanka's stand," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 17 May 1998.
98 M. de Silva, "Hindu Bomb: why an ethnic tag," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 14 June 1998.

99 Ibid. He makes a similar point in "India after nuclear tests," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 17 May 1998.

100 "Double standards and atomic colonialism," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 17 May 1998.

101 "Are we ready for the great referendum," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 10 August 1997.

5 SRI LANKAN BUDDHISM AND JUST-WAR THINKING REVISITED

1 R. Gombrich and G. Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 385.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 390.

4 R. Lingat, *Royautes Bouddhiques: Asoka et La Fonction Royale à Ceylan*, Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1989, p. 110; J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performance in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993*), Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1995, p. 30.

5 K. Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 93.

6 Ibid.

7 For more on the significance of the MPNS and the study of relics, see ibid., p. 119.

8 For more on the paradigms of world conqueror and world renouncer, see S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror, World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

9 For a translation of this passage, see M. Walsh (trans.), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995, p. 264.

10 Ibid., p. 570, note 403.

11 *Digha Nikaya* 2.166.

12 For more on the relationship between the Tooth and political power, See H. L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. The *Culavamsa* is a continuation of the *Mahavamsa*.

13 W. Geiger (trans.), *Culavamsa*, *being the more recent part of the Mahavamsa*, Colombo: The Ceylon Government Information Department, 1953, p. 31.

14 H. L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, p. 16.

15 W. Geiger (trans.), *Culavamsa*, *being the more recent part of the Mahavamsa*, pp. 249–50.

16 H. L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, p. 96.

17 T. Bartholomeusz, "First among equals: Buddhism and Sri Lanka," in I. Harris (ed.), *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth Century Asia*, London: Pinter, 1999, pp. 173–93.

18 "Govt. has spent Rs. 1485 m to foster, protect Sasana," *The Daily News* (Colombo), 10 August 1998.

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20 Ibid.

21 K. Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition*, p. 94.

22 *Mahavamsa* XXX.100; and see ibid.

23 J. Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory*, Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1978, p. 110.

24 Ibid., p. 111.

25 *Ceylon Daily News*, 17 April 1939. Quoted in K. Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka,* Colombo: Centre for Social Science, 1985, p. 30.
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27 Quoted in K. Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*, p. 51.
28 J. Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory*, p. 111.
29 "Why only five years? Why not full ten years?" *Heritage*, 2, 5 (April–June 1998). *Heritage* is published in both English and Sinhala.
30 See Note 31 below.
31 "Proposed draft constitution riddled with riders," *The Island (*Colombo), 7 December 1997.
32 "Mangala and the Sangha," *The Island*, 5 October 1997.
33 See "Ranil slams Mangala's remarks on Sinhala Commission," *The Island*, 28 September 1997.
34 T. H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, New York: Harper, 1961, p. 17.
35 Ibid., p. 24
36 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performance in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, p. 165.
37 Ibid., p. 164.
38 H. L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, p. 97.
39 J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performance in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, pp. 169–70.
40 Ibid., p. 165.
41 S. Sarkar, *Studies in the Common Jataka and Avadana Tales*, Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1990, p. 74 (the Jataka from which this line is taken is the *Vartakapotaka Jataka*); and ibid., p. 164.
42 See J. van der Horst, *Who is He, What is He Doing: Religious Rhetoric and Performance in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa's Presidency (1989–1993)*, p. 169, for a monk's explanation about the meaning and relevance of the ritual of *satyakriya*.
43 See Chapter 1 of this study. See also T. Bartholomeusz, "First among equals: Buddhism and Sri Lanka," in I. Harris (ed.), *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth Century Asia;* and T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva, "Buddhist fundamentalism and identity in Sri Lanka," in T. J. Bartholomeusz and C. R. de Silva (eds), *Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, p. 2, wherein the Supreme Advisory Council, in part consisting of monks and with constitutional authority, is discussed.
44 For instance, *The Island*, 26 January 1990, which depicts on page three "Army Commander Lt. Gen. Hamilton Wanasinghe receiving the blessings of the Maha Sangha on his recent visit to the Sri Dalada Maligawa in Kandy."
45 "For love of the country," *The Island*, 1 February 1998."
46 "Maha Thera talks of the brave Sinhala," *The Daily News*, 18 July 1995.
47 "To send your children to the army is a greater deed than ordaining them – Paathegama Bajjaya himi," *Divayina* (Sinhala), 7 July 1997.
48 The Venerable Pandit Welamitiyawe Kusaladhamma Nayaka Thera, quoted in "Sanghika dana to bless country," *The Daily News*, 14 July 1997.
49 Premadasa was the first post-independence leader to hold both portfolios. Kumaratunga, however, no longer holds the portfolio of the Ministry of Buddha Sasana. When I enquired from the present minister, Lakshman Jayakody, why this is the case, he told me that Kumaratunga thinks that it is inappropriate for a woman to preside over the activities of Buddhist monks. My interview with Minister Jayakody was held on 15 July 1997.
50 See Chapter 2 of this study for more on legitimate authority.

51 J. H. Yoder, *When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996, p. 149.
52 "Postpone elections, say Maha Nayakas," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 21 June 1998.
53 "PC elections should not hinder the war," *The Daily News*, 6 July 1998.
54 L. Rajakarunanayake, "LTTE bags provincial polls," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 2 August 1998, original italics.
55 P. H. D. H. de Silva, "Only way to establish peace totally crush LTTE," *The Island*, 31 July 1998.
56 T. W. de S. Amarasekera, "The Maha Sangha and elections," *The Island*, 15 July 1998; the letter is a critique of the 24 June 1998 editorial in *The Daily News*; capitalization and spelling are faithfully reproduced, yet the emphasis is mine.
57 "PA's package woes and war," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 20 June 1997.
58 "Thero attacks LSSP," *The Daily News*, 20 January 1958.
59 "Prelates call for unity among Sinhalese," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 19 July 1998.
60 Quoted in "Hand over country to Maha Sangha says thera," *The Island*, 12 October 1997.
61 "Fight for peace the Gandhian way – NMT," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 28 June 1998.
62 Ibid.
63 "Reach a consensus," *The Daily News*, 11 July 1998. The letter to the editor was written by a critic of the monk – namely, J. T. Mirando.
64 "Fight for peace the Gandhian way – NMT," *The Sunday Times* (Colombo),, 28 June 1998.
65 "Splits in the Alliance and protest campaigns over polls," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 19 July 1998.
66 Ibid.
67 K. Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*, p. 99.
68 "Reach a consensus," *The Daily News*, 11 July 1998.
69 Dr P. Dissanayake (Secretary, National Joint Committee), "Sinhala Commission Report," *The Island*, 2 August 1998.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 "Establishment of an exclusive Tamil 'Malayanadu' Thondaman's wish – Ven. Sobitha Thera," *The Island*, 29 July 1998.
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74 Quoted of Dr P. Dissanayaka in "Establishment of an exclusive Tamil 'Malayanadu' Thondaman's wish – Ven. Sobitha Thera," *The Island*, 29 July 1998.
75 "To Protect Sinhalese consider commission report – Ven. Madihe," *The Island*, 22 July 1998.
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81 "People's Alliance Government saved country from disaster," *The Daily News*, 20 August 1998.
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83 Ibid.
84 J. T. Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, pp. 29–33.
85 S. J. Tambiah, " The Buddhist conception of kingship and its historical manifestations: A reply to Spiro," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 37 (1978): 806–7.
86 K. Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*, p. 2.
87 S. J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996, p. 48; Tambiah quotes ibid., pp. 6–7: "Bureaucrats and missionaries were attacked for their religion and the campaign was directed against the 'Christian' power rather than against British colonialism. Even if this was a tactic to avoid charges of sedition, it had the effect of arousing the Buddhists to a 'holy war' instead of an anti-colonial struggle."
88 K. Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka*, p. 29; Sinhala spelling is faithfully reproduced.
89 A. Tilakaratne, "Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka: Search for a middle position," Twenty Seventh Sir Baron Jayatilaka Memorial Lecture, 13 February 1994, *The Buddhist* (1994): 9.
90 Ibid., p. 12.
91 E. Leach, "Buddhism in the post-colonial political order in Burma and Ceylon," *Daedalus,* 102 (1973): 34.
92 H. Aryadharma, "Caste," *The Buddhist*, I, 39 (13 September 1889): 310.
93 D. C. Pedris, "The etymology of Ruanweli," *The Buddhist*, I, 51 (6 December 1889): 404, emphasis added.
94 Ibid.
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96 Ibid.
97 "Tigers cash in," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 2 August 1998.
98 J. H. Yoder, *When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking*, p. 152.
99 "Tigers cash in," *The Sunday Leader* (Colombo), 2 August 1998.
100 Ibid., original italics.
101 "Defeat terrorism, separatism and racism" (an open letter to the Indian prime minister from the Committee for National Movement Against Terrorism), *The Sunday Times* (Colombo), 2 August 1998.
102 Ibid.
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